The Jew of Malta Study Guide

The Jew of Malta by Christopher Marlowe

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Christopher Marlowe's fourth play, *The Jew of Malta,* is thought to have been performed as early as 1590, although the first recorded performance was in February of 1592. This play was probably written In 1589; however, it was not actually published until 1633, long after Marlowe's death. The title page describes the playas the "Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta," but it is also often described as black or satiric comedy, and so, any indication of tragedy is eclipsed. And indeed, Barabas does not elicit the audience's sympathy as a tragic hero, as might be expected. However, in spite of this lack of a tragic hero, the play was very popular in Renaissance England, encompassing as it did attacks on both Roman Catholics and Jews, two favorite objects of distrust. *The Jew of Malta* was performed many times, both at court and in the theatres of London, prior to the theatres' closing in 1642. The play is filled with blood and murder, also favorite topics of the Elizabethan audience, who embraced the bloody revenge tragedies of the period. Marlowe's own reputation for violence and an unconventional lifestyle probably added to the play's attraction. Three years later, Marlowe's own bloody death would make the violence of the play even more attractive. There is no known source for Marlowe's play, although the image of the Jew as a greedy usurer was a common image in the English theatre. Marlowe was interested in depicting the differences between what men professed and what their actions revealed. Thus the dangers of Catholi cism, the corrupting force of the Jews, and the characters' own greed proved to be important themes when the play was first produced. For a modern audience, however, the visible stereotyping of Jews, with its accompanying images of the destructive Force of anti-Semitism, often offends the audience, thereby limiting its production.

Author Biography

Many scholars believe that had Christopher Marlowe lived longer, he might have become a greater dramatist than William Shakespeare. Marlowe was born a few months before Shakespeare. in 1564, to John and Catherine Marlowe of Canterbury, where the senior Marlowe was a shoemaker. Marlowe attended Cambridge University, where he received a bachelor of arts degree. Marlowe continued on at Cambridge, using a clergyman's scholarship to fund his studies. Scholars generally agree that Marlowe probably never had any intention of joining the clergy, but he was willing to say that he might be so inclined, in order to continue with his studies. When he was finally awarded his master's degree in 1587, after a great deal of controversy and amid charges that he was secretly planning on becoming a Catholic priest (Catholics could not receive degrees From Cambridge during this lime, and priests were widely suspected of plots to overthrow the queen), he was ranked 199 out of 231 students. After leaving Cambridge, Marlowe moved to London, where he is reported to have had frequent problems with the authorities. He was briefly jailed for murder, although later he was found to have acted in self-defense. He was also charged with atheism and blasphemy and was awaiting trial for these offenses when he was killed in a brawl, supposedly over an unpaid dinner bill, in 1593. Marlowe's death, from a stab wound to his forehead, remains controversial, however, since some scholars argue that his death was not really the result of a dispute but was more likely an assassination of a disreputable public figure.

Marlowe's first play to be produced was *Tamburlaine Parr* (1587). Though it was produced shortly after he left Cambridge, scholars now think that Marlowe probably wrote *Dido Queen of Carthage* (first published in 1594) as early as 1586.

His first production was so popular with the public that Marlowe soon followed with a sequel, *Tamburlaine. Parr II,* a year later. Marlowe was the first to use blank verse in a play; previously, the standard had been for rhyming verse, which Marlowe condemns in the prologue to *Tamburlaine. Part I.* Another play, *The Jew of Malta,* followed in about 1589-1590 (although it was not published until l633), with *The Massacre of Paris* following in 1593. This last play was never published, and the only known copies are based on an undated and unreliable edition. Marlowe's next play, *Edward /I* (1592), is considered to be the first great English history play. However, most scholars consider *Doctor Faustusto* be Marlowe's greatest work. This lasl play was not performed until after Marlowe's death and was probably unfinished when the playwright died. Marlowe also wrote many poems during his short life, many of them inspiring later poets to match his talent and wit. Marlowe was a compelling dramatist on the scale of Shakespeare; however, Shakespeare would live another twenty-three productive years after Marlowe's death. Shakespeare's greatest works were composed after 1600, more than seven years after Marlowe died. Had he lived longer, Marlowe's work might well have matched the work of the greatest playwright England ever produced.

Plot Summary

Act I, Scene 1

The *The Jew of Malta* opens with Barabas in his counting house, busily counting his most recent earnings and hoping that his vessels will do well on their current journey. Soon, several merchants enter to tell Barabas that his ships are in the port, each laden with wealth. Barabas is pleased that his ships have arrived safely, in spite of the many risks that his wealth-laden ships face on the sea. When he is alone, he credits God With making him rich, saying that Abraham and his descendents were promised much happiness. He would rather be an envied and hated Jew than a poor Christian, with only his faith to sustain him. Barabas soliloquizes that he is content not to be a ruler but would rather profit from rulers. At that moment, three Jews enter to tell Barabas of the arrival of a delegation from Turkey. Barabas is unconcerned, since he does not care for his adopted country and cares only for the well-being of his daughter and his wealth. But the Jews also bring word of a meeting in the Senate House, at which all Jews must be present.

The next scene takes place in the Senate House. The Turks have arrived to demand that a tribute, long overdue these past ten years, be paid. The governor of Malta requests a month so that he can try and collect the money After the Turks leave, Governor Ferneze calls the Jews in to tell them of the demand. He relates the information that Malta lacks the money for the tribute because of the expensive wars just passed. But more importantly, he intends to assess the Jews for the cost of the tribute. Each Jew is to pay one half of his estate or become a Christian. If any Jew refuses, he will lose all that he has. The three Jews who accompany Barabas willingly agree to give half their money, but Barabas complains, and the governor claims all of his estate. When Barabas tries to retract and submit only half, he is denied. After all has been seized, and he is left alone, Barabas' daughter Abigail enters, sincerely mourning her father's pain. She tells her father that their home has been turned into a convent, and he may never enter there again. But Barabas has hidden wealth in the house, and he needs to retrieve it, and so he hatches a plot to force Abigail to pretend to be a nun, so that she might enter mto the house and retrieve his money.

Act II

The act opens with Abigail throwing jewels and gold out of a window to her father, waiting below. In the next scene, Martin Del Bosco, a vice-admiral from Spain, arrives in Malta to conduct a sale of slaves that were rescued after the sinking of some Turkish ships. Ferneze, though, is frightened of the Turks, who will oppose the sale However, Del Bosco convinces the governor not to pay the tribute previously assessed by the Turks, claiming instead that Spain will become Malta's protector. At the slave sale, Barabas buys Ithamore, whose price is cheaper than the first slave that Barabas encounters. As these two exchange their personal histories, It becomes apparent that

Barabas and Ithamore have very similar personalities At the same time, Barabas manages to entice both Lodowick and Mathias with promises about his daughter. When Lodowick arrives at his home, Barabas instructs a reluctant Abigail to entice Lodowick into making love to her. When Mathias arrives, Barabas suggests to him that Lodowick is a persistent and unwanted suitor. But when Mathias leaves, Barabas has Lodowick betrothed to Abigail, even though she protests that she loves Mathias. Barabas next gives Abigail to Mathias, who is further incited to kill Lodowick. The act ends with Ithamore carrying a false challenge from Lodowick to Mathias.

Act III

The act opens with a brief scene, in which Ithamore sees a courtesan, Bellamira, and desires her The action then shifts to Lodowick and Mathias who meet near Barabas' house, duel, and each man kills the other. Ferneze and Katherine arrive, and each one mourns the death of a beloved son. The scene next shifts to Ithamore who is laughing at the cleverness of Barabas' revenge. Abigail soon enters, and Ithamore explains the simple plot that resulted in the deaths of Lodowick and Mathias. Abigail is shaken by her father's treachery and by the deliberate pain that he has caused her, and in response, she once again enters the convent, intending to become a nun. This time she is Sincere in her desires and even writes to her father that he should repent his sins. When Barabas learns of Abigail's decision, he is enraged and promises to disinherit her. In her place, Barabas makes Ithamore his heir, adopting him as a son and giving him access to his wealth. To assuage his anger, Barabas next sends a pot of poisoned rice porridge to the convent, which all the nuns eat and are poisoned. Abigail also eats it, but before she dies she implicates her father in the deaths of Lodowick and Mathias and begs the priest to convert her father and save him Her implication is given as a confession, and the priest is obligated to hold the account sacred. Meanwhile, the Turks have arrived to demand their tribute, but Ferneze, supported by Del Bosco, refuses to pay When the Turks leave, Ferneze prepares for war.

Act IV

As the act opens, Barabas and Ithamore celebrate their success at poisoning the nuns Barabas only grieves that his daughter lived long enough to become a Christian. When the friars arrive to convert Barabas, he is angry that Abigail has betrayed him and promises to be converted. However, his promise sets the two friars to fighting over which one will have the privilege of claiming the conversion and Barabas' wealth, which will go to the winning friar. Barabas is able to send Friar Bamardine off with Ithamore; later, Barabas and Ithamore strangle him. The two conspirators prop the murdered friar up, and when Friar Jacomo arrives, he strikes the body of Friar Bamardine, which topples over, convincing Jacomo that he has killed Bamardine. Barabas and Ithamore promise to turn Jacomo over to the authorities, so that he can be punished. Meanwhile, Ithamore has become enraptured with Bellamira, who is plotting with Pilia-Borza to steal Barabas' money. In his desire for this woman, Ithamore is enticed to blackmail Barabas in an attempt to gain money. More Importantly, Ithamore tells Bellamira and Pilia-Borza

of the Crimes that he and Barabas have committed. Later, Barabas disguises himself as a musician and gains entrance to Bellamira' s house, where he poisons the courtesan, Ithamore, and Pilia-Borza with flowers, which are laced with a slow-acting poison.

Act V

The act opens with Bellamira and Pilia-Borza confronting Ferneze with their information. The governor orders that Ithamore and Barabas be arrested, and the two are quickly brought in. Ithamore immediately confesses, and Ferneze orders Barabas taken away to prison. Within a few moments, Bellamira, Ithamore, and Pilia-Borza succumb to the poison that Barabas had earlier given them, and word arrives that Barabas is also dead; however, he is feigning death. Ferneze orders that Barabas' body be thrown over the wall, outside the city. The rest of the dead are to be buried. Barabas quickly awakes from the potion that he had consumed earlier and decides that he will help the Turks enter the City and seize It. Calymath promises to make Barabas governor If the siege is successful. The Turks are successful and Ferneze and his men are captured. Barabas is given charge of the prisoners, but he is still not satisfied with his revenge. Barabas next tells Ferneze that for the proper price, he will help him destroy the Turks and have his city returned. Accordingly, Barabas devises a plot to get Calymath and his men to a monastery outside the City walls, where he will then have them killed. Soon, Barabas is busying himself with building a trap that will destroy all the Turks. The men will be blown up, and Calymath and his officers will be cast into a pit of boiling liquid. But at the last minute, Ferneze betrays his coconspirator, and cuts the cord, throwing Barabas into the boiling pit. Before he dies, Barabas confesses to all his Crimes. At the play's conclusion, Calymath is Ferneze's prisoner, and all his men are dead.

Prologue

Prologue Summary

Christopher Marlowe, an Englishman, wrote in the late 1580s and early 1590s. His play *The Jew of Malta* was performed for the first time in 1592. Marlowe wrote several plays in which palace intrigues became part of the plot. He was jailed a few times for alleged libel. Marlowe died in a barroom brawl in May of 1593. Other playwrights used some of his plots, and some exact wording may seem familiar to the reader from plays by Shakespeare. During Marlowe's lifetime, religion was tied to political power, and due to the Spanish Inquisition, some Jews fled to Malta.

The character Machevill appears. He is Marlowe's confused interpretation of Machiavelli, who wrote about power and how to get it. In this Prologue, Machevill's spirit praises greed and amoral behavior to obtain and keep power. This character introduces Barabas and relates that he obtained his wealth and miserly ways by following Machevill's recommendations on how to live and conduct business.

Prologue Analysis

Marlowe sets the tone and attitude of the play by introducing a controversial character that tells us that the Jew of Malta is an evil character. Machevill and in turn Barabas represent the amoral character that will do anything to gain power and wealth.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

Barabas enters his counting house. There are stacks of gold and heaps of worldly possessions such as silks and refined goods all about him. He says that while he must accept goods as payment, he would much rather be paid in gold, silver or gems. He doesn't like dealing in goods that could burn or be lost at sea. Barabas is expecting some of his ships. One of his merchants enters to tell him a ship with his goods has landed, and others are expected soon. Taxes must be paid on the imports before they can be offloaded. Barabas directs the merchant to advise the tax collectors that the goods are owned by him, the Jew of Malta, who can be trusted to pay the taxes. He orders the merchant to go and begin the inventory and offloading without him. The merchant leaves.

A second merchant enters to tell Barabas that he came on a ship that had Spanish ships and Turkish ships close behind. He fears that the Turks may be coming to attack. Barabas orders him to go to the docks to unload everything immediately. After he leaves, Barabas speaks about the dangers of being an independent Jew with no particular political alliance. He is happy with wealth on earth rather than the possibility of a happy afterlife that Christians believe is their due. Barabas believes that many Christians work almost as slaves to enrich their king and their Catholic Church.

Three Jews enter to tell Barabas that the Turkish warships have come into the harbor, and they are worried for their safety. Barabas says that surely the Turks have come to talk. As an aside, Barabas tells the audience that he doesn't care if the Turks do wage war, so long as he and his daughter are safe and his wealth untouched. Barabas states that it would be more likely they are passing through on their way to attempt to wage war on Venice.

The Jews tell Barabas that all Jews have been ordered to appear at the senate house at a particular time. They do not know what the meeting is about, but they fear it will be bad for them. Barabas tells them he will watch out for his own safety and suggests they do the same. The other Jews exit. Barabas knows that the Turks controlled the islands before and may want to again. They have made increasing demands over the years for more money from Malta. Barabas believes it may be that this time they will demand too much money as an excuse for taking over Malta. If they do, Barabas says that he believes he has hidden his wealth so well that they would never find it.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

Marlowe is developing the storyline by introducing Barabas. In the very first scene Barabas shows how he cares only for himself, his wealth and his daughter, in that order. Barabas does not care what happens politically, so long as he can keep his wealth.

Barabas shows a prejudiced stereotype of Jews. By comparing his desire for wealth on earth to Christians' desire for heaven, Barabas couches his greed in terms of his religion. The nature and morality of Judaism will be explored further in the play as a major theme. Barabas, however, is not only representative of Judaism, but also of human greed.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

The scene opens with Ferneze, the Maltese governor, some of his men, some bashaws, who are Turkish military men, and Calymath, the leader of the Turks. Ferneze demands to know why they have come. The bashaw says that Malta has gone too long without paying tribute and demands the equivalent of ten years worth of tribute. If the tribute is not paid, they will seize power over Malta.

Calymath, the son of the Turkish ruler, introduces himself and states that he is carrying out his father's orders. Ferneze replies that they do not have this much money in the government treasury and tries to negotiate. Calymath and he reach an agreement that the Turks will return in one month for the money. Calymath and the bashaws leave.

Ferneze asks a knight about the Jews, who are arriving. Barabas and the Jews from the previous scene enter the stage. Ferneze greets them and tells them of the monetary demand by the Turks. Ferneze reminds Barabas that the government has spent so much on military defense that there is little money on hand. He asks for Barabas's assistance. Barabas states that he is not a soldier and can offer no physical help to defend Malta.

Ferneze orders the knight to begin reading a decree. It states that one-half of the wealth of all Jews will be seized in order to gather the tribute money Malta needs. It also states that Jews must convert to Catholicism. Ferneze tells them that they are infidels, a people cursed by God. Barabas argues with him. Then the knight reads that if any Jew refuses to convert and fights against the delivery of half of his wealth, he can then have all of his wealth confiscated. The other Jews quickly agree to convert and deliver half of their wealth rather than lose everything. Barabas then turns on the Jews and expresses his disdain for them.

Ferneze uses his authority to tell Barabas that all of his wealth is forfeit because he did not immediately agree to the demands. Ferneze tells him that he will let him stay to start over and perhaps become wealthy again. Barabas tells them that he is too old to start with nothing. The knight tells Barabas that if he is unable to acquire more wealth, it is his own fault for his inherent sin of being a Jew, accursed by God.

Barabas reminds them that there are wicked Christians and Jews and that he has tried to lead a righteous life. Ferneze replies that if he is righteous, then he should be able to make a living. He orders Barabas to leave. The knight suggests that the home of Barabas is so big that it would make a nice nunnery for the Catholic nuns.

Officers of Malta enter and tell Ferneze that they have seized the home of Barabas and all of his assets they could find. They also tell the governor that Barabas has vast sums of wealth, more than anybody else on Malta. They confirm that they have gotten half of

the assets from the other Jews. Barabas curses at Ferneze by telling him he is taking the property in the name of the devil. Ferneze and his knights exit to inventory the wealth, leaving Barabas and the other Jews.

Barabas is on his knees. He implores God to bring curses on the Christians, alluding to curses God brought down on the Egyptians when the pharaoh would not let the Jews leave Egypt. The other Jews try to calm him, but he chastises them for having given in so easily. He tells them his suffering is far worse than anything that Job went through. He continues his rant, so they leave him alone.

Barabas sees his daughter Abigail approaching. He greets her. She tells him she will go to the senate house and beg the governor to undo what he has just done to Barabas. He tells her that wants her to pretend to convert to Catholicism and enter the nunnery, their former home. He tells her where he has hidden his gold. He gives Abigail specific instructions of a time in the middle of the night for her to appear at a specific window to drop down sacks of gold to him.

Three friars and two nuns, including the Abbess, enter the scene. The nuns admit that they have not been out among lay people in many years. The friars are directing them to the former house of Barabas and extolling its many amenities. Abigail approaches them and tells the nuns that she feels in her heart that she should formally convert in atonement for the sins of herself and her father. The Abbess agrees to allow her into the nunnery.

Barabas comes out of the shadows and pretends that he is just arriving. He verbally attacks Abigail for being with the friars and nuns. He tells her she is no longer his daughter while with whispers he tells her exactly where to find the gold and when to appear at the window. Barabas exits the stage in one direction, and the friars, nuns and Abigail leave the opposite direction.

Mathias enters. He has seen Abigail leave with the nuns. He is in love with Abigail and heartbroken that she would leave him and become a nun. Lodowick enters the stage. He is a good friend of Mathias and the son of Ferneze. Mathias tells Lodowick why he is so upset, since he loves Abigail. He extols the virtues of Abigail, who is fourteen. He fears that she will take vows as a nun in penitence for the sins of her father. Lodowick wants to meet her to see her beauty, so he suggests that he and Mathias go to see her, to try to talk her out of taking her vows. They exit the stage.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The story develops as the Turks arrive, and the government seizes the miser Barabas's wealth. Not only are the Jews forced to give up their money, but they are directed to give up their religion as well. Most of the Jews do this right away, to avoid losing their wealth, which is again an indication of negative Jewish stereotypes. In reality, not many people are willing to give up their religion, at any price. While Barabas refuses to

abandon his religion, even at the cost of all his property, the reader knows that Barabas has hidden wealth, and his hidden assets give him the security to stand up to the state.

The character of Barabas is further developed by his use of Abigail. He will have her lie and cheat and appear to reject her religion as a way to recover most of his wealth. Abigail represents the character who has torn allegiances, but she is willing to do this to make her father happy. Marlowe introduces Mathias and Lodowick, who represent an important part of a future conflict.

Ferneze is punishing the Jews for being Jewish. Allusions are made to their sin, and they are blamed for the death of Jesus. Marlowe uses the common Christian belief of the time that Jews were actually damned by God for their roles in delivering Jesus to the Romans for crucifixion.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

The scene is dark. Barabas enters carrying a light as he approaches his former home. He prays to God to help Abigail deliver his gold to him. He asks God to strike him dead rather than live in poverty. Abigail appears at an upstairs window. She has found his gold and is carrying some. Barabas says that she glides out so quietly he is reminded of a ghost. He feels lifeless without his money and says that he will haunt this place if he dies without recovering it. Abigail has not seen him yet. She prays that Barabas will awaken and appear as they had planned. Barabas makes his presence known. He speaks of Abigail as his star, shining in the east. Abigail greets him and begins dropping bags of gold down to him. She warns him it is about time for the nuns to get up for prayers. She leaves the window, and he departs, acting very happy to have his hidden money back.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

Abigail has been loyal to Barabas by following his instructions. She has risked her life by delivering his money to him, which will give him a fresh start in business. Abigail is a Jewess who is also willing to break the law for her father. Barabas shows how much the money means to him as he leaves the stage. The reader should pay particular attention to this scene and compare it to the balcony scene from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.*

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

Ferneze and some of his men come onto the stage, where they meet Martin del Bosco, a vice-admiral of the Spanish navy. The vice-admiral says that his armada has recently done battle with some Turkish ships, and they have come to Malta to sell their Turkish prisoners. Ferneze is afraid of retribution by the Turks when they return, so he turns del Bosco down. Ferneze is happy to learn that the Spanish navy has weakened the Turks. He tells del Bosco of the conflict with the Turks. Del Bosco indicates that his king also considers the Turks to be enemies and that Spain would not want the Turks to control Malta. He offers to write to the king to obtain permission for his armada to stay there to fight off the Turks. He tells them that Spain would be their technical ruler, but he believes that Ferneze could continue to rule Malta as its governor. Under these terms, Ferneze allows del Bosco to stay and sell the slaves. They all exit the stage.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

Ferneze knows that Malta is vulnerable and not strong enough to fight off the Turks. Like the Jews who easily betray their Judaism to save some of their wealth, Ferneze easily betrays Malta, putting it under Spanish rule, in order to save some of his power as governor. Marlowe's plot is actually following much of the history of Malta as various political entities controlled it. This foreshadows the events that will occur as a result of the alliance between Ferneze and del Bosco.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

Two Spanish officers are at the marketplace selling their captives. Each slave has a price marked on his back. The prices are reasonable since the Spanish want to get rid of the slaves quickly. Some Maltese citizens are concerned that the slaves will revolt and help the Turks when they return.

As Barabas is approaching, he speaks to the audience of having bought another house and gotten Abigail to return to him. He intends to undo Ferneze's plans in some way. He says he will pretend to fawn over Ferneze and will do whatever it takes to keep what he has. He sees Ferneze's son Lodowick approaching. He says he hopes to trick him and Ferneze. As he approaches, Lodowick tells the audience that he is going to be nice to Barabas in an effort to meet Abigail. He wants to know if she is beautiful. In an aside, Barabas tells us that he will be somewhat rude to Lodowick. He believes Lodowick would expect him to do so and would be suspicious of him if Barabas were too friendly.

When Lodowick asks Barabas if he has a diamond left that Barabas could sell him, Barabas tells him that his father has seized all of his diamonds except the one he has left, his daughter. As an aside, Barabas tells the audience that he will see Abigail dead before he will allow her to marry the son of Ferneze. He tells Lodowick that Abigail is bright and outshines the moon. He invites Lodowick to his house to meet her. Barabas tells the audience that he is beginning to come up with a plan to get even with Ferneze. Barabas gripes about the nuns having taken over his original house. He tells Lodowick he is on his way to the slave market.

Barabas views various slaves and haggles over prices. He picks Ithamore, a slave who was born in Thrace but raised in Arabia. He pays the Spanish officer and bids farewell to Lodowick so that he can take Ithamore home. He invites Lodowick to come later to visit and meet Abigail. Mathias and his mother Katherine enter the edge of the stage. Mathias sees Lodowick talking to Barabas. He tells his mother he is afraid that Lodowick is trying to get to know Abigail by being friendly with Barabas. Lodowick leaves the scene as Barabas tells the audience and Ithamore that he will try to frustrate both Lodowick and Mathias in their efforts to win Abigail from him.

Mathias and Katherine approach Barabas. Katherine speaks to the Spanish officer about purchasing a slave. Mathias asks Barabas if Lodowick has been inquiring about Abigail. In an aside, Barabas tells Mathias to come to his house later to see Abigail. Barabas tells Mathias out loud that he and Lodowick spoke only about diamonds. Katherine becomes upset when she sees Barabas and Mathias speaking. Barabas tells Katherine that he and Mathias were talking about a couple of books Mathias wanted to borrow from him.

Katherine fusses at Mathias for speaking to a Jew, and she directs Mathias to leave with her and the slave she has just purchased. Mathias and Katherine leave with the slave. The officers and the remaining slaves leave. Barabas gets to know Ithamore as they walk toward the home of Barabas. Ithamore admits he has few skills. Barabas cautions Ithamore not to trust the Christians. Barabas tells Ithamore that he has killed many people. He has lived many places and studied medicine and engineering. He has learned how to kill using poisons. He also tells Ithamore that he has been allied with certain kings in wars, while secretly plotting against them, as well as having been a usurer who forced many people into bankruptcy.

Ithamore tells Barabas what he has done to hurt Christians. They arrive at the new home of Barabas. Lodowick comes to meet Abigail, so Barabas calls her out. Out of the earshot of Lodowick, he tells Abigail to do everything she can, short of losing her virginity, in entertaining Lodowick. Barabas tells Lodowick he has business to attend to, so Abigail will keep him company. Barabas tells Abigail privately to try to get Lodowick to fall in love with her. Abigail tells her father that she is already in love with Mathias.

Abigail and Lodowick leave. Barabas says that he has a plan to secretly cause the death of both Mathias and Lodowick. Mathias comes to see Abigail. Barabas greets him and warns him that Lodowick is secretly courting Abigail. Mathias is furious at Lodowick. Barabas tells Mathias that he thinks that Lodowick has slipped into the house and is with her. Barabas has Mathias promise not to commit any violence in his home. Barabas promises Mathias that he will tell Lodowick that Mathias and Abigail are already in love and for Lodowick to leave Abigail alone. Barabas has Mathias hide where he can see Lodowick enter with Abigail. Mathias leaves once he sees that Lodowick is there.

Lodowick notices Mathias as he is leaving the home. Lodowick asks why Mathias should be there. Barabas warns him that Mathias loves Abigail and may challenge him. Barabas indicates to Lodowick that Abigail has loved Lodowick from afar for many years and that Abigail does not return Mathias's affections. Lodowick looks at Abigail, who smiles lovingly back at him. Lodowick asks Barabas for permission to marry Abigail. Barabas feigns happiness and tells Lodowick that he approves. Barabas whispers to Abigail to go along with the ruse. Abigail leaves, worried about what her father is planning.

Mathias is seen returning. Barabas talks Lodowick into leaving by promising to tell Mathias that Abigail is betrothed to him and that Mathias must abandon his love of Abigail. Lodowick exits reluctantly. When Mathias enters, Barabas tells him that Lodowick has tried unsuccessfully to court Abigail. He assures Mathias that Lodowick's love for Abigail is unrequited and that she has remained steadfast to Mathias. Mathias is furious with Lodowick. He wants to chase after Lodowick and fight him immediately, but Barabas makes him promise not to duel on his premises. Mathias promises he will fight Lodowick soon and leaves.

Abigail is upset with her father. She knows he is pitting one man against the other. She tells her father that she loves Mathias, and she wants to tell them of her father's

deception. Barabas is mad at her for loving a Christian. He directs Ithamore to lock her up in her quarters. Ithamore does so and returns for further orders. Barabas sends Ithamore out on a task that will help flame the conflict between Mathias and Lodowick. Barabas goes to speak to Lodowick to try to further enrage him against Mathias.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

Barabas has begun to carry out his plans of getting revenge against Ferneze by harming Lodowick. The audience sees that there are serious, bigoted feelings between members of the various religions depicted here, particularly the Christians against the Jews and the Jews and Muslims against the Christians. Young Abigail wants to please her father, but she does not want to hurt the man she loves or his relationship with his friend. Katherine, the mother of Mathias, speaks in a bigoted way about Barabas. She represents the typical reaction at that time of hatred by Christians against Jews. Marlowe keeps Barabas and Ithamore in caricature forms, representing Jews and Muslims. The depth of Barabas's evil is seen in this scene. He is not only greedy, but he is also a murderer.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

Bellamira, a prostitute, enters the stage. Since the political climate is so unstable, few men have been around to pay for her favors. She is depressed and going broke. Pilia-Borza, a male friend, arrives. He shows her a bag of money. She assumes it is silver, but he assures her it is gold that he has stolen from Barabas's house. They see Ithamore approaching. Pilia-Borza wants to leave, but Bellamira finds Ithamore attractive. She decides to engage him in conversation. Ithamore notices the concubine but knows he has no money to pay her, so he continues on. He is hoping Barabas will pay him money for the forged challenge he has delivered. He knows it will lead to a duel between Mathias and Lodowick.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

Ithamore is telling the audience that he delivered to Mathias and Lodowick forged documents that will lead to a duel between them. Through the introduction of Bellamira and Pilia-Borza, we learn that Barabas has been sloppy in his manner of keeping his gold, and two more people may conspire against Barabas to steal his wealth. (It seems out of character for Barabas to leave his gold somewhere a thief could find it, and Marlowe perhaps overlooks this simply to move the plot forward.) Like the moves on a chessboard, Marlowe is making the events unfold in ways beyond those anticipated by Barabas.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

Mathias and Lodowick enter. They challenge each other based on the forged letters originated by Barabas. Barabas secretly watches as they duel until they mortally wound each other. Barabas rejoices and leaves. Ferneze, Katherine and other citizens come onto the stage. They find the bodies of their sons. They try to understand why best friends would duel. Ferneze and Katherine vow to figure out what happened. They leave with the bodies, determined to avenge the deaths.

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

The first murders planned by Barabas have occurred. Barabas has gotten his revenge, but the audience does not know yet what will be the cost of that revenge. Ferneze and Katherine have the financial resources and power to investigate the mystery.

Act 3, Scene 3

Act 3, Scene 3 Summary

Ithamore returns to the home of Barabas. Abigail asks why he is so happy. He tells her that Barabas wrote documents that he took to Lodowick and Mathias. The result was a duel that led to the death of both of them. Abigail sends Ithamore to find some friars and to bring them back to her. Abigail makes a speech wherein she states that she can no longer trust her father for the harm he has caused others. She feels there is no pity in his heart. Ithamore returns with Friar Jacomo. Abigail sends Ithamore away. She does not give details, but she tells Jacomo that she has been thinking about the religious teachings she has received from the nuns and feels in her heart it is time to return to them. She admits to Jacomo that she was not ready the first time, but she tells him that she is now. He agrees to take her to see the Abbess.

Act 3, Scene 3 Analysis

Abigail now realizes that Barabas loves his wealth more than anything. He will not overlook his hatred of Christians, even when his daughter falls in love with one. Her love just incites him to murder, as does his need for revenge against Ferneze for seizing his assets. Abigail will not cross Barabas, but she can no longer stay with him. If she speaks up now and tells Jacomo what Barabas has done, she knows Ferneze will have Barabas killed. She turns her back on her father by turning her back on her religion. In this way, Barabas is equated with Judaism, which is portrayed as heartless and evil.

Act 3, Scene 4

Act 3, Scene 4 Summary

Barabas enters reading a letter from Abigail wherein she tells him she has joined the nuns again and begs him to give penitence for his sins. Barabas is furious. He believes that she no longer loves him and may betray him by telling what he has done. Barabas makes plans to kill Abigail and everyone at the nunnery. He has Ithamore bring out a large pot of fresh rice porridge. He adds a slow-acting poison to it and has Ithamore deliver it to the door of the nunnery. As Barabas stirs in the poison, he invokes curses upon Abigail and those who will consume the rice. He tells Ithamore to take the pot and return straight away as he has other chores for him.

Act 3, Scene 4 Analysis

Marlowe is showing yet again what a wicked man Barabas is. Barabas's actions escalate to murdering not only his daughter, but also an entire nunnery. He loves his own life and his wealth even more than his daughter. He would rather kill her than flee and start elsewhere. He doesn't trust Abigail. Barabas shows us what a wicked character he is by keeping poison on hand. As Abigail's flight to the nunnery is a rejection of Judaism, Barabas's assault on the nunnery is a full-scale assault against Christianity.

Act 3, Scene 5

Act 3, Scene 5 Summary

Ferneze, del Bosco, some knights and a bashaw enter the stage. The bashaw tells Ferneze that it is time to deliver the gold. Ferneze tells him that the Maltese have decided that they would rather burn and ransack the island themselves and flee to Sicily before they will pay the Turks. The bashaw says that his men will return to do the ransacking themselves, and he leaves. Ferneze directs his men to spread the word to prepare for battle.

Act 3, Scene 5 Analysis

The plot is leading to the culmination of the strife between the Maltese and the Turks. There is no mention of Ferneze returning the gold he has seized from the Jews. Presumably he will keep it in the government coffers or for himself. Ferneze knows there will be a war, and he can only hope that the Spanish will have the king's permission to help.

Act 3, Scene 6

Act 3, Scene 6 Summary

Friar Jacomo is on stage. He says that all of the nuns at the nunnery are sick and dying. He says that they must send for the doctor. Friar Bernardine answers him that the Abbess has sent for him to take her final confession. Jacomo leaves, and Abigail enters and says she will die too. Abigail confesses to Bernardine about what her father did to Lodowick and Mathias. She shows him the letter Ithamore delivered. She begs Bernardine not to tell anyone else what she has revealed to him. He assures her that anything heard in confession is absolutely secret. She asks him to try to save Barabas by converting him, and then she dies. Friar Jacomo returns. He plans the burial of the nuns. Bernardine tells Jacomo that something important has been revealed to him and that he will talk about it with him after the burials.

Act 3, Scene 6 Analysis

This scene is short, but it is very important. Abigail does not die with her father's secret untold. She has revealed it. Barabas's plan to stop Abigail from talking has failed, and many innocent people have died needlessly. Note that Barabas chooses a slow-acting poison, giving Abigail the opportunity to reveal Barabas's secret.

Act 4, Scene 1

Act 4, Scene 1 Summary

Barabas is happy as he hears the bells signaling the death of the nuns. He was afraid that the poison had been diluted so much it might have only made them sick. He hopes that no one suspects poison. Barabas reminds Ithamore that he would cut his throat if he ever told. Ithamore asks if Barabas is grieving for the death of his daughter, and he denies it.

Jacomo and Bernardine approach and begin to chastise Barabas for his sins without admitting specifically what they are talking about. He jokes back that he is a Jew and a usurer and that he has committed fornication. They bring up the names of Mathias and Lodowick. Barabas as an aside says that he knows Abigail must have told them about his role in the duel. Barabas surprises them by saying that he will repent. He tells them of his wealth and offers to give it to one of their religious orders if they will take him in and train him in Christianity.

Barabas knows that once he does this, the friars cannot turn him over to the authorities. He rightly thinks they are greedy enough to want his wealth. Bernardine agrees to make the arrangements to convert Barabas and get his wealth. However, Jacomo refuses to leave. After Bernardine goes into Barabas's house, Barabas tells Jacomo that from what he has heard, he believes that Jacomo's order is preferable to the one to which Bernardine belongs. He tells Jacomo to leave and to come back later after he has had time to tell Bernardine that he will be joining Jacomo's order of friars. Jacomo leaves.

Ithamore returns and assures Barabas that he has locked Bernardine into a soundproof room in the house. They go in and find Bernardine asleep. Barabas and Ithamore discuss ways they can kill him before Jacomo returns. They wake Bernardine and strangle him. Ithamore leans Bernardine up against his staff. Jacomo returns to the house and sees Bernardine. He assumes Bernardine wants Barabas's wealth for his own order and is trying to stop Jacomo from entering. Jacomo strikes out and hits Bernardine, who falls over. Jacomo thinks he has killed Bernardine. Barabas and Ithamore come and act as though Jacomo has just murdered his fellow friar. Ithamore and Barabas turn Jacomo in to the authorities, where he will be prosecuted.

Act 4, Scene 1 Analysis

Barabas continues to kill anyone who might have any knowledge of what he did to Mathias and Lodowick. He also wanted to kill the friars in case they have any knowledge of the poisonings. Marlowe portrays Barabas and Ithamore as cruel and wicked, and their actions continue to escalate.

Act 4, Scene 2

Act 4, Scene 2 Summary

Pilia-Borza comes to Bellamira and confirms that he has delivered her letter to Ithamore. He tells her he met Ithamore at the gallows where Jacomo has been hanged for murder. Ithamore comes on stage talking to himself about the way Jacomo seemed to welcome his death. As he approaches Bellamira and Pilia-Borza, he is muttering to himself at how forward the letter was from her. He did not expect to have such a beautiful woman declare her love so overtly.

Ithamore tells her he has no money. Pilia-Borza and Bellamira drop hints about absconding with some of Barabas's assets. Ithamore admits that Barabas keeps his treasure buried. They then ask if he has some information about Barabas that they could use to blackmail him. Ithamore admits he does. Ithamore writes to Barabas demanding a lot of gold or else he will tell others what Barabas has done. Pilia-Borza goes to deliver the letter, and Ithamore and Bellamira make love. Pilia-Borza returns with a few gold pieces. Ithamore is furious and writes another letter demanding even more money.

Act 4, Scene 2 Analysis

Marlowe is setting the stage for the final conflict. Barabas is being blackmailed by unsavory characters with everything to gain in extorting money from him. Barabas realizes that Ithamore, a Muslim, has deserted him. Ithamore, a slave, is not loyal to Barabas. Like Barabas, he is out for his own ends, and his loyalty stops as soon as he sees a better deal.

Act 4, Scene 3

Act 4, Scene 3 Summary

Barabas enters reading aloud the letter from Ithamore. He is very upset at Ithamore's betrayal. Pilia-Borza comes with the second letter demanding even more money. Barabas recognizes that Pilia-Borza is armed and dangerous. Barabas finally gives him some of the gold that Ithamore has demanded, but he tells him to come back for more since he has misplaced his keys to his counting house.

Ithamore and Bellamira have been drinking, and Ithamore's tongue is loose. He tells her and Pilia-Borza about all of the murders. Pilia-Borza and Bellamira are happy because they know this is information they can use to demand all of the Jew's wealth. Ithamore warns them that Barabas is fond of poisons. Barabas arrives in the disguise of a musician. He plays the lute and listens to determine what Ithamore has revealed. Barabas hands a posy out of his hat to Bellamira. She and the others smell it. Barabas smiles, since he knows that the poison on it will kill them. Barabas leaves.

Act 4, Scene 3 Analysis

Barabas is too smart and too evil to simply give up his wealth. He knows that extortionists will never stop. Ithamore is so enamored of Bellamira and so drunk, literally as well as figuratively, that he loses his senses about the likelihood that Barabas will kill them. Once again, Barabas resorts to murder, showing his evil essence.

Act 5, Scene 1

Act 5, Scene 1 Summary

Ferneze, his knights and del Bosco are strategizing battle plans. Bellamira and Pilia-Borza enter. They tell him about the cause of death of Mathias and Lodowick, as well as the poisoning of the nuns. Ferneze sends for Ithamore and Barabas. They enter the scene, held by Ferneze's officers. Ithamore is beginning to feel the poison. He confesses immediately. Ferneze orders that Ithamore and Barabas be taken to prison. Barabas denies the charges and tells Ferneze that he should not believe a prostitute, a thief and an unhappy slave. Ferneze sends them all to prison so that he can attend to the battle first.

Soon a knight returns and tells them that all four people have died suddenly. He brings the body of Barabas to show him. Ferneze orders the body thrown over the wall of the city to be left for the vultures. Barabas gets up as soon as everyone else has left. He has feigned death. Calymath arrives and finds Barabas. He starts to kill him, but Barabas assures him that he has been exiled as a Jew and that he knows a secret entrance to the city. He tells them that he hates the Christians. He offers to lead some of Calymath's men in and have them open the gates from the inside.

Act 5, Scene 1 Analysis

The audience sees how smart and cunning Barabas is. He has anticipated that he might be taken into custody, and so he has a blend of herbs that will make him seem dead. He hopes that Ferneze's officers will not look at him too carefully. He joins forces with the Turks to presumably get revenge, but really his goal is to keep his wealth. Barabas is loyal to no one but himself and nothing but his wealth, and his fealty is to whoever will allow him to keep his life and money. Again, note the similarity to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in the use of herbs that simulate death.

Act 5, Scene 2

Act 5, Scene 2 Summary

Calymath has conquered Malta with the help of Barabas. The scene opens with the Turks chastising Ferneze and his men for refusing to pay tribute money to them. He reminds them that they relied on the Spanish king, who did not help them. Calymath appoints Barabas as governor as a form of rebuke to Ferneze. Calymath exits to go see what shape the island is in. Barabas turns Ferneze and his knights over to the Turks to imprison them.

Barabas speaks of the fact that everyone on the island will hate him. He will try to figure out a way to have someone else take over so that he will no longer be a target. Ferneze is brought in by a guard. Barabas sends the guard away. Barabas readily admits that he does not want to be governor. He offers to kill the Turks and turn the power back over to Ferneze if he will gather up money from the citizens and pay it to Barabas. Ferneze agrees, and Barabas sends him out to get the money and tells him to return for a feast for Calymath. Barabas knows that Calymath will soon sail, so he has planned a way to trap part of his men in one location, while preparing a trap for Calymath and the rest of his men at the governor's citadel. Alone on stage, Barabas speaks of the loneliness he feels, always having to play one enemy off against the other in order to stay alive.

Act 5, Scene 2 Analysis

While Barabas could rule Malta under the authority of the Turks, he worries about assassination and knows he would rather concentrate on making more money. He is already planning to double cross the Turks. This way, he thinks he can continue on in Malta, and the Maltese will forgive him for the murders he has already committed. The actions of Barabas show how much he loves money and how little he cares about people. He professes his loneliness, but Barabas has brought this state of affairs about himself.

Act 5, Scene 3

Act 5, Scene 3 Summary

Calymath has inspected the rest of the island and is directing his men to prepare to sail. A messenger arrives with an invitation from Barabas for all to feast with him before they sail. Calymath is nervous and worried about the locals setting up traps. He tells the messenger that all of his men could not fit into the citadel. The messenger tells him that a feast for the rest of the men has been set up at an old monastery on the edge of town. Barabas has promised a very large, precious pearl will be given to Calymath. Calymath accepts the invitation and orders his men to clean up and get ready for the banquet.

Act 5, Scene 3 Analysis

This short scene foreshadows the tumultuous events that are about to occur. Calymath's greed over the promise of a rare pearl has caused him to lose sight of the danger he and his men are in. Barabas has counted on him being greedy, as he assumes most men are.

Act 5, Scene 4

Act 5, Scene 4 Summary

Ferneze is with his knights and del Bosco. They have been making plans, although the plans are not revealed to us. Ferneze sends them away, but he tells them to return with weapons, ready to fight when they hear a cannon discharged.

Act 5, Scene 4 Analysis

In another short scene, the audience realizes that Ferneze is conspiring against someone for his own salvation. Vice-Admiral del Bosco is there, so the audience knows that the Spanish are involved. Marlowe is setting things in motion in these last scenes to lead to the climax of the play.

Act 5, Scene 5

Act 5, Scene 5 Summary

Barabas is in the governor's citadel, finishing up some construction. He pays the carpenters, and they leave. The messenger returns to tell him that Calymath has accepted his invitation. Barabas sees Ferneze approaching. He asks him how much money has been pledged by the citizens to pay Barabas to return the power to Ferneze. He tells him a hundred thousand pounds. Barabas tells Ferneze to hold onto the pledges until the Turks have been killed. Barabas tells Ferneze about the trap set at the monastery for the Turks. He also shows him the trap set for Calymath and his men. Barabas gives Ferneze a knife and tells him that when he hears a cannon, he is to cut the cord holding up the area that Barabas has just had built. He tells Ferneze that underneath are large pots of boiling water and sharp instruments upon which Calymath and his men will fall and be killed.

Calymath and his men enter and greet Barabas. He invites them up the stairs to dine. Ferneze asks Calymath to come over to him. Ferneze directs his own men to sound the alarm. He warns Calymath that Barabas has set a trap and cuts the cord. The stage collapses, and Barabas falls into a cauldron of boiling water. He begs for help. No one will help him, so he curses them all as he dies.

Ferneze tells Calymath that Barabas laid the plans to kill Calymath. He also says that he believes that Calymath is more valuable alive and makes Calymath a prisoner until his father makes reparations for the damages the Turks have done to Malta. The play ends.

Act 5, Scene 5 Analysis

The play reaches its climax when Ferneze outwits Barabas in his attempts to kill Calymath. Ferneze is smart enough and presumably Christian enough to view Calymath as more valuable alive. However, he feels no mercy for Barabas and kills him rather than imprison him until he can stand trial for murder. Thus, Marlowe shows the ongoing strife of political and religious differences among the Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Characters

Abigail

Abigail is Barabas' beautiful daughter She is in love with Mathias, but is forced by her father to agree to a betrothal to Lodowick. She knows that the two young men will now hate one another but hopes that she will be able to reconcile them after she explains what has occurred. Before she can rectify things, Lodowick and Mathias kill one another, and Abigail enters a convent. When she is near death, Abigail Implicates her father in the two men's deaths and asks a friar to help her father repent and be converted to Christianity. Abigail's actions in the opening scene of the play illustrate how much she loves her father. She is an obedient and loving daughter, an innocent who is not deserving of death. Like the death of Mathias, Abigail's death proves how corrupt Barabas is and how far he will go to seek revenge.

Barabas

The soliloquy that opens the first act reveals a greedy merchant, busily counting his money and complaining about the lack of financial reward from his recent dealings. Moreover, he also complains of how tiring it is to count such small change and wishes he could be like merchants in other countries who can deal with gold without all the restrictions under which he must deal Barabas is an elitist, who views himself as superior to those who surround him. He is also clever, hatching a plot to retrieve the wealth that he has hidden in the foundation of his house. When Abigail throws the bags of jewels and gold to her father, he scarcely notices her or even acknowledges her. All he can do is embrace his money, proving that he loves wealth more than his own child. Although he has, once again, bought a large home and amassed a fortune, Barabas is angry and vengeful, plotting ways to destroy the governor who sought to destroy him. To gain revenge, Barabas plots to have the governor's son killed. Barabas sees no inequity in killing the governor's son and thinks it an even trade for the loss of his money. Even though his daughter is in love with Mathias, Barabas uses her to entrap both young men, happily offering his own chaste daughter to seduce a man she does not love. Mathias' only fault lies in his Christianity.

Barabas does not want his daughter to marry a non-Jew, and so he can easily justify killing the young man. Barabas sees no crime in killing Christians. After Abigail converts to Christianity, Barabas readily plans her murder. His only regret at her death is that she did not die sooner, before she betrayed her Jewish ancestors and became a Christian. The two friars are also easily disposed of since they too are Christian and so have no value to Barabas. And even though Ithamore has been an able assistant in all these plots, Barabas also poisons him when it becomes necessary Barabas is a caricature, embodying many sixteenth-century stereotypes of Jews. He is ruthless and has no conscience, caring for little except his money and revenge. In the end, Barabas is killed through hIs own plotting, leaving no one to mourn his passing.

Friar Barnardine

When Abigail needs to make her last confession, it is Friar Barnardine who is available. When she tells him that her father needs to be converted and must repent for the murders of Mathias and Lodowick, the friar betrays his vows and divulges the information to Friar Jacomo. Barnardine sees the conversion of Barabas as a way to get all the Jew's money for his monastery. He is motivated less by religious zeal and more by greed. In the end, Barabas and Ithamore also murder him. But more importantly, his actions suggest that Catholic priests are corrupt, something that reflected much of the public's opinion in Renaissance England.

Bellamira

Bellamira is a prostitute who has fallen on hard times. She has few customers now, and only Pilia-Borza gives her money. The slave, Ithamore, finds her attractive and thinks that if only he had money, he could possess her Bellamira entices Ithamore to blackmail Barabas for money, promising him favors in return. As a result of her greed, she dies of poisoning, another victim of Barabas' thirst for revenge.

Selim Calymath

Calymath is a Turkish prince, the son of the Grand Seignior. Calymath comes to Malta to demand that a long overdue tribute be paid to his father. He wants to be reasonable, and when the governor asks for time to collect the money, he is inclined to allow them time. When the governor later refuses to pay, Calymath returns to attack the city. He trusts Barabas and even awards the Jew the governorship of the City He very nearly dies at Barabas' hands and is Imprisoned by Ferneze.

Martin Del Bosco

Del Bosco is the vice-admiral of the Spanish king. He convinces Ferneze not to pay the tribute, promising Spain's help in defending Malta from the Turks. But he is easily overwhelmed by Calymath' s forces and is of little help to Ferneze.

Ferneze

Ferneze is the governor of Malta. Since he does not have the money to pay the Turks, he decides to force the Jews to pay it. His seizure of Barabas' wealth is absolute and without further consideration. Ferneze points out that coveting money is a sin, and so he uses religion and Christianity as an excuse for his actions. Ferneze has little compassion for Barabas, whom he thinks can always make more money. Ferneze is more than willing to keep the tribute that he has collected and so accepts the Spanish offer for assistance. He grieves over his son's death and promises revenge but is easily

duped by Barabas. However, in the end, Ferneze proves himself as devious as his enemy. He manages to kill Barabas, imprison his enemy, Calymath, and restore peace to his City.

Ithamore

Ithamore is a slave, purchased by Barabas. Like his master, Ithamore is happy to destroy people and to create intrigue. He happily joins in the plots, and when all the nuns are dead, Ithamore even suggests poisoning all the priests. He has one weakness, a courtesan, Bellamira. She entices him to blackmail Barabas, though he must realize this would be very dangerous, having assisted the ruthless Barabas with many murders. Ithamore is either incredibly stupid, or he is so enamoured of this woman that he ceases to think. Perhaps it is both, since in the end, he too is poisoned by his former master.

Friar Jacomo

Friar Jacomo first appears when Abigail is initially admitted to the convent. This first time, she is deceiving the friar and the nuns, doing only her father's bidding. But Friar Jacomo cannot detect this deception. He again interviews Abigail, when, after Mathias and Lodowick die, she again seeks sanctuary in the convent. He is absent when Abigail dies and so does not hear her confession, but he is eager to earn the financial rewards that would accompany Barabas' confession and conversion. Like Friar Barnardine, Friar Jacomo is greedy, thinking of money first, but he also illustrates an important concept for the anti-Catholic movement in England: that priests are themselves so corrupt that they cannot recognize insincerity in others. Friar Jacomo's inability to detect Abigail's lies casts doubt on the friar's own piousness. This is born out when he strikes Friar Barnardine. Although he does not actually murder the friar (Barabas does this), his hanging for the crime, then, seems to be the deserved punishment of a corrupt priest.

Katherine

The widowed mother of Mathias, she distrusts Barabas and warns her son to stay away from him. After Mathias is murdered, she vows that his murderer will be punished, never believing that Mathias' best friend, Lodowick, is guilty of the murder.

Lodowick

Lodowick is the governor's son and a friend of Mathias. He has heard much about Abigail's beauty and wants to see her. He mistakenly believes that Barabas wants him to be a suitor for Abigail. Lodowick sees Abigail and wants to marry her. He agrees to a betrothal, not knowing that Abigail loves Mathias, nor understanding that Barabas is using him to gain revenge against his father. After he is tricked into meeting Mathias for a duel, Lodowick is killed, although not before killing his good friend.

Lodowick is himself an innocent victim, serving only as a way for Barabas to gain some revenge against the young man's father.

Machiavel

Machiavel speaks the prologue to the play and is meant to represent a reincarnation of Machiavelli.

In the prologue, he speaks of the Machiavellian ideal of ruthlessness as a means to ensure great political and financial success.

Mathias

Mathias is a young gentleman who has seen Abigail and who admires her beauty. He becomes her suitor, and she returns his love. He is tricked by Barabas into believing that Lodowick is an unwelcome suitor who would steal Abigail After Barabas tricks Mathias into meeting Lodowick for a duel, the two young men kill one another. Mathias is guilty of no crime, nor is there any reason for Barabas to have him killed. He is expendable because he is a Christian and because he dares to love Abigail. Mathias' death serves as the first symbol of Barabas' depravity.

Pilia-Borza

Pilia-Borza is a thief who tries unsuccessfully to steal Barabas' money Together with Bellamira, Pilia-Borza devises a plot to seduce Ithamore into helping them blackmail Barabas After he learns from Ithamore that Barabas is responsible for the deaths of Lodowick and Mathias, Pilia-Borza tells Ferneze, hoping to earn a reward. In the end, Barabas poisons this traitor, just as he has so many others

Themes

Appearances and Reality

One of the central themes in *The Jew of Malta* is the differences between what is real and what only appears real. For instance, Ferneze suggests that in taking all of Barabas' wealth, he is not at fault, but only fulfilling the curse of the Jews' inherited sin (Matthew 27:25). But Ferneze uses religion when It is convenient. He ignores the Christian admonition of kindness toward all men, and he lacks any compassion for the Jews. When he needs money, the Jews are suddenly outsiders, although there is every evidence that the governor has made use of the Jews when he needed their financial assistance. But Ferneze is not alone in his deception. The friars pretend to be pious when all they really want is Barabas' money. But Barabas is the most accomplished at deception, pretending to be outraged and destitute at the governor's confiscation of his property, but when alone, dealing matter-of-factly with the events, Since he still has plenty of money hidden away. Barabas also pretends to both Lodowick and Mathias that Abigail shall belong to both young men. He pretends to befriend them, when he is really plotting their deaths. He also pretends to the friars that he will convert, setting them against one another, and he even pretends to the Turks that he is their friend, when he plans to murder them all. Barabas is a master at deception, but in reality, he is little different than the other characters-only more willing to kill his victims, rather than rob them.

Betrayal

The most significant betrayal in tills play is found within the relationship between father and daughter. Abigail loves her father enough that she consents to a deception of the nuns, so that she can retrieve his hidden wealth. But Barabas betrays his daughter when he plots to destroy the man she loves. Mathias has done nothing to injure Barabas, but he is useful because he is both Lodowick's friend and Abigail's suitor. Barabas thinks that Mathias can be sacrificed because he is a Christian and so has no value to Barabas. But in murdering the young man, he betrays his daughter's implied trust that a father would not deliberately injure his daughter. When Abigail is dying, she thinks only of saving her father. She tells a friar of her father's murder of the young men-not to injure him, since the priest is obligated to keep the secret by the sanctity of his office-but to try and save him. She still loves her father, not knowing that he has deliberately poisoned her. There are lesser betrayals, such as that of Ithamore, who betrays his master because of lust for Bellamira, but none of the other betrayals are as significant as Barabas' betrayal of his daughter's love.

Greed

Almost every character in *The Jew of Malta* is motivated by greed. Barabas has more than enough money. He could easily have given half his estate to the governor and still had more than enough, but he wanted all that he had and even more. Ferneze, too, wants even more money. He is not willing to sacrifice to pay the tribute to the Turks, but, instead, wants to take the money from the Jews, and not content with half, he demands all of Barabas' wealth. Calymath's father has waited ten years to demand his tribute, not because he had forgotten about the money, but because he felt that by letting the tribute accumulate, the citizens of Malta would be unable to pay the tribute, and he could seize everything.

Ithamore is promised one half of Barabas' estate, as his heir, but he is not content to wait and keeps increasing his blackmail demands for more and more money. Pilia-Borza and Bellamira are also motivated by greed to try first to steal and then later to blackmail money from Barabas. The friars, too, are motivated more by greed than piety in their attempt to convert Barabas. The need for more and more money has infected almost everyone in Malta.

Moral Corruption

Marlowe's Elizabethan audience would have automatically expected the Catholics to be depicted as corrupt. Corrupt friars have a long-standing literary tradition going back to Geoffrey Chaucer, and Marlowe's friars fit neatly into this tradition. The two squabble about who will have the privilege of saving Barabas' soul, but neither one is really interested in the Jew's eternal salvation. Barabas' repentance will come with his wealth, and each sees this wealth as a benefit to his own order By the end of the play, Barabas has himself become corrupt. Throughout most of the play, he has been guided by revenge, dispatching most of his victims because they threaten him. But in the final act, he has achieved nearly everything he set out to do. Ferneze has been imprisoned; the rest of Barabas' enemies are all dead, and Barabas is the governor of the island. But then he sets out to methodically kill all the Turks, who have helped him accomplish all that he desired. Barabas has won, but he has enjoyed all the intrigue and the murder, and he does not wish to stop. He betrays his own motives in this final onslaught and is himself killed, corrupted by his own lack of moral guidance.

Prejudice

The stereotyping of Barabas and his general treatment by the Christians of Malta reflect Elizabethan Ideas about Jews. There are references to Barabas' nose (evidently the actor playing this role wore a large false nose) and to Christian myths about Jews: they poison wells, kill sick people, murder at will, and cheat honest Christians out of their money. But there are also stereotypes about Catholics included in the text: their piety is false, nuns and priests engage in Illicit sexual affairs, and they care more about money than the souls of their flock. As is the case with the Jews, the stereotypes about

Catholics reflect the general Elizabethan fears about Catholics, whom they suspect of constantly trying to sell their country to the Pope in Rome

Style

Acts

The Jew of Malta is a five-act play. The exposition occurs in the first act when the audience learns of the injury done to Barabas. By the end of act 2, the complication, the audience has learned that Barabas will not be satisfied with the money he has recovered He wants revenge on all the Christians in the city and is plotting to have the two young men, Lodowick and Mathias, murder one another. The climax occurs in the third act when these young men die, Abigail converts to Christianity, joins the convent, and is subsequently murdered The murder of the friars and Ithamore's betrayal of his master provide the falling action in act 4, and the catastrophe occurs in the last act when Barabas overreaches his goal and finally dies in his own trap.

Character

Characterization is the process of creating a lifelike person from an author's Imagination. To accomplish this the author provides the character with personality traits that help define who he will be and how he will behave in a given situation. *The Jew of Malta* moves away from this strict definition, Since the characters are not well-defined. The audience does not really know or understand the character as an individual. For instance, Barabas is a stereotype, a caricature of a greedy Jew, the usurer who was well known to the audience.

Genre

This term refers to types of literature such as mystery, science fiction, comedy or romance. *The Jew of Malta* is officially a tragic drama, according to its title page, but many scholars now refer to it as an example of extreme satiric or black comedy.

Plot

The plot provides the author with the means to explore primary themes. Students are often confused between the two terms; but themes explore Ideas, and plots simply relate what happens in a very obvious manner. Thus the plot of *The Jew of Malta* is the story of how Barabas was wronged by the Catholic governor and so vows revenge upon the entire City, even sacrificing his own daughter. But the theme is that of greed, corruption, and religious depravity.

Setting

The location for Marlowe's play is Malta, which is Important, since the English audience considered almost any location outside England to be suspect and filled with corrupting forces This was especially true of any location that was controlled by Catholics.

Historical Context

The Catholic World

In the course of Marlowe's play, the author manages to provide a negative depiction of two major religious groups, the Roman Catholics and the Jews. In both cases, these depictions reflect the general attitude of his English audience toward these two entities. Much of the religious rhetoric in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* reflects the real-life tensions between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, which was formally established by Elizabeth I in 1559. After the formal establishment of the Church of England, some of the tension of the past twenty-five years dissipated, primarily because the queen was more tolerant of religious choice and less likely to endorse the extreme prosecution that Mary I favored. During the brief years of Mary Tudor's reign, 1553-1558, religious intolerance and religiously-inspired murder became commonplace. Mary, who was a Roman Catholic, Immediately reinstated Catholicism as the official religion in England; she also reestablished the Pope's dominion over the English. Moving quickly, she outlawed Protestantism to please her new bridegroom, Philip of Spain. Protestants were persecuted, and hundreds were burned at the stake when they refused to convert to Catholicism. Mary's ruthlessness earned her the nickname, "Bloody Mary." In contrast to Mary's rule, Elizabeth seemed a refreshing new breath in the kingdom. She was young and beautiful, full of energy, and vibrant. And although she quickly established Protestantism as the official religion, she manifested none of the intolerance of her older sister, Mary. The legacy of Mary's reign was a fear of Catholicism and a determination to permit no Roman Catholic in government, or in power. The immediate effect of Mary's reign was that any plotting that was discovered, any subversion that was detected, any unexpected crisis, could well be credited to Catholic sympathizers. Even nearly forty years after her death, the people were still afraid of the Catholic Church and convinced that the Pope might at any time reappear to claim their country in the name of the Roman Catholic Church. This distrust of Catholics was evident in Marlowe's own life, when his final degree from Cambridge was held up after university officials became concerned that Marlowe intended to become a Catholic priest and join a group of expatriate Roman Catholic priests who had taken refuge at Rheims, where, with the Pope's assistance, they were plotting an overthrow of Elizabeth I and the Church of England. All of this plotting, whether real or Imagined, left the average English citizen distrustful of any Catholic and convinced that they were all dishonest thieves

The Jewish World

The stereotyping of Jews in Elizabethan England is not as easily explained There had been massacres of the Jews earlier in England's history.

In 1189, Jews were massacred to celebrate the coronation of Richard I, and in the following year, more than five hundred Jewish men, women, and children were

massacred by people indebted to Jewish moneylenders. Officially, Jews had been banished by English law since 1290, when Edward I ordered all Jews to leave England That decision, however, did not reflect anti-Semitism as much as a business choice. Italian banks were interested in handling English banking and commerce and insisted that all the Jews be banished to eliminate competition. The expulsion in 1290 cleared England almost completely of all Jews. After that period, and untll the middle of the seventeenth century, only a few Jews entered the country, and these were largely physicians invited for their professional abilities. There was a small group of crypto-Jews (people forced to embrace Christianity who secretly held on to their Jewish faith) living in London during the late sixteenth century, but few of Marlowe's contemporaries knew of their existence. At the time that Marlowe was writing the *The Jew of Malta* his audience had no firsthand knowledge of Jews. What the depiction of Jews in Marlowe's play illustrates is the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism, even in a country where people had no experience with Jews. Marlowe was an educated man, with knowledge of the world. It is obvious that he would have known about anti-Semitic stereotyping, and he was also aware that his largely uneducated audience would be adept at recognizing his stereotypes. Like those involving the Catholic Church, the stereotyping of Jews played well to an audience trying to survive in a tension-filled world Elizabeth had defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, only a year before Marlowe began writing his play. Conse quently, the threat from outside forces was a very real part of English life. When people feel threatened, they often respond with attacks on anyone who seems different or threatening In this case, both the Catholics and the Jews appeared to be available subjects for stereotyping.

Critical Overview

When Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta* first appeared on stage during the Winter season of 158990, it was evidently very popular with the theatergoing public Scholars only know this because It was performed many times during the coming years. In many ways, Marlowe's own notoriety probably added to the audience's interest. But then, a few years later, when the queen's Jewish physician was accused of trying to poison her (generally regarded as a false accusation), Marlowe's depiction of the Jew engendered even more interest. Performances of Marlowe's play continued for the next several years right up until the closing of the theatres in London in 1642. When the theatres reopened, after the Restoration in 1660, tastes had changed and the "blood tragedies" of earlier years were no long as popular.

There is little information about specific performances in the period following *The Jew of Malta's* initial success until the twentieth century, during which there have been few productions. Because of the Holocaust, staging Marlowe's play before a modern audience has become a problem. The overt anti-Semitism present in the play cannot be ignored, nor can audiences ignore the implications of how effectively Adolf Hitler played upon Europe's tradition of anti-Semitism to destroy SIX million Jewish citizens. One recent production, in October 1999, was staged at the Almeida Theatre in London and met with some success, in large part because the actor playing Barabas made the character so sympathetic and so enjoyable to watch. In his review for the *Times* (London), Benedict Nightingale points out that the audience finds itself "rooting for the villain, especially as the Jew is played by an infectiously gleeful Ian McDiarmid." Clearly this performance succeeds because the play is performed as "farce and melodrama." Nightingale also notes the differences between *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice,* which is more subtle in its anti-Semitic depiction of a Jew. Nightingale states that the audience is more likely to feel sympathy for Shylock, who loses out to "contemptuous Christians," than for Barabas, who, by the conclusion of Marlowe' s play, has become a monster.

In another review, Susannah Clapp, writing for the *Guardian Unlimited,* also notes the comic touches, calling them "grotesque," but labeling the playa "vibrant cartoon, not a work of reflection." Part of the difficulty, according to Clapp, is that "Marlowe's play is repugnant to modern taste." This is because the word Jew is a "synonym for a wheedler, a schemer, a miserly accumulator of vast wealth and a cheater on his fellows. . . [with ultimately the Jew taking] to arranging myriad murders, including that of his own daughter." Clapp does admit that the play is about more than anti-Semitism, with almost all the characters portrayed as "rampant hypocrites." Yet in spite of this, Clapp argues that the anti-Semitism "taints" the play. Clapp also calls McDiarmid's acting a "triumph," and observes that the set design is also very effective.

In one other review of this production, Charles Spencer, writing for *The Daily Telegraph* (London), asks, "Has there ever been a funnier account of a psychopathic killer than *The Jew of Malta?* This play, according to Spencer, cannot be labeled a tragedy, since it "is not a work that arouses pity or terror." Citing the "loud bursts of discomfited laughter"

from the audience, Spencer labels the play black comedy, which he supposes might have been closer to Marlowe's intent, Since he had "an irresistible urge to cause outrage." Spencer also agrees with other reviews in citing McDiarmid's performance as Barabas as particularly strong. This especially well-received production succeeds, though, because it is played as a comedy, as all three reviewers note. Few of the revenge tragedies of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century are produced for the enjoyment of modern audiences. As Nightingale observes, tastes change, and as the most recent production of *The Jew of Malta* suggests, this play only succeeds as modern entertainment If It is played for laughs.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Metzger is a Ph.D., specializing in literature and drama at The University of New Mexico, where she is *a lecturer in the English Department and an adjunct professor in the University Honors Program Metzger is also a professional writer and the author of several reference texts on literature. In this essay, she discusses the problem of anti-Semitism in* The Jew of Malta *and the difficulties in staging a modern performance.*

Although Marlowe is considered one of the great Elizabethan playwrights to emerge from the Renaissance, only one of his plays, *Doctor Faustus,* is still produced frequently before modern audiences. Unlike William Shakespeare's plays, which have been very popular in their many film adaptations, Marlowe's plays have not found a home in Hollywood. During the Elizabethan period, however, his plays were very popular, ushering in a great theatrical renaissance in England. *The Jew of Malta,* in particular, was very successful with audiences. Because of several severe outbreaks of the plague, the London theatres were closed frequently in the period following the initial production of the *The Jew of Moira,* but the actors took the play out of town for a successful tour, and when the theatres again reopened, Marlowe's drama again played to enthusiastic London audiences, as it would continue to do for many years until the closing of all the theatres in 1642. Now. more than 350 years later, little is heard of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta.* Because of modern sensitivities concerning anti-Semitism. most directors have a difficult time finding an approach to this play. One approach is to stage the playas farce, but even comedy cannot erase the message in the text. In her review of a 1997 performance of *The Jew of Malta.* in which the play was presented as a black comedy, Susannah Clapp states that "Marlowe's play is repugnant to modern taste:' This is often the opinion of both modern reviewers and audiences. Plays are not meant to be read; they are designed to be seen and heard, and so it is worth considering whether any approach to this play might make it palatable to a modern audience.

In presenting *The Jew of Malta* before a con temporary audience, the most significant problem is the depiction of Barabas. Marlowe paints the Jew so vilely that he becomes almost a comic figure, but that is not how Marlowe intended the audience to view his Jew. The title page of his play makes clear that for Marlowe, at least, his play is "A Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta." It is a tragedy because Barabas cannot be redeemed. The depiction of the Christians in this play is equally unsympathetic, and thus, Marlowe's anti-Catholic audience might have forgiven Barabas any number of sins. But there are two sins they could not overlook. The first problem is Barabas' refusal to be converted to Christianity. For the Elizabethan audience, conversion was one way to eliminate the image of the Jew as the crucifier of Christ. In Elizabethan England, anti-Semitism was not racism. Unlike Adolph Hitler, who believed that blood determined an individual's Jewishness, the Elizabethans correctly understood that Judaism was a religious choice, and one that conversion would cure. The second problem is Barabas' lack of loyalty to his own country In the final act, Barabas is rewarded With the governorship of Malta. He has his riches, and he has the ultimate revenge on Ferneze: his job. But Barabas chooses to betray Calymath and destroy the

city. For Marlowe's audience, devoutly supportive of their queen and country, the Jew's actions are heinous. But Barabas has no loyalty to Malta because he belongs to no country. By the late sixteenth century, the Jews had been exiled from many of the countries, in which they had settled, and they could claim no allegiance to anyone country. Marlowe's Jew, then, correctly depicts two historical problems that confronted the Jews: refusal to convert to Christianity and the absence of any loyalty to a country of origin.

None of these problems would concern a modern audience, who would not be offended by Barabas' lack of loyalty to an adopted country; nor would a modern audience care that Barabas refuses to be converted. Current events could either enhance these problems or mitigate them In the year following Marlowe's death, the queen's physician, Roderigo Lopez, was accused of trying to poison the queen and was quickly executed. Tills event, coupled with Marlowe's own grisly murder, made his gruesome and bloody play even more popular with audiences, and anti-Semitism, which is frequently hidden away and awaiting an excuse to emerge, reappeared. In the Elizabethan world, Jews were automatically assumed guilty of any heinous crime, and in the case of Lopez's execution, the anti-Semitic hysteria reflects the fears of the people regarding the possible death of a queen who had no heirs and who had des1gnated none. For Marlowe's play, current events only exacerbated the anti-Semitism of the play. But, just as Marlowe's audience could be swayed by current events, so too, is a modern audience influenced by contemporary events. Today's audience cannot view Marlowe's play without the specter of the Holocaust haunting the production. But a modern staging must confront its own political and social realities. Reviews of recent performances of *The Jew of Malta* reveal the difficulties in staging any modern production of th1S play Anti-Semitism made people uncomfortable even before the Holocaust, espec1ally when it is as blatant as it is in Marlowe's play, and in a post-Holocaust world, it becomes nearly unthinkable.

When scholars discuss *The Jew of Malta,* they most often discuss 1t within the context of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* wh1ch has 1tS own problems mounting a successful modern production. Many of the problems that William Meyers observes in Shakespeare's play are applicable to Marlowe's In his essay, "Shakespeare, Shylock, and the Jews," Meyers discusses the problem of anti-Semitism and declares that" [c]ertain cultural constructs take on the force of myth and become indestructible; they are proof against reality." Thus it does not matter what an audience might actually *know* about Jews. Neither Marlowe's nor Shakespeare's aud1ence had any firsthand experience with Jews. The myth of the Jew was kept alive in England long after the Jews were expelled, first through the mystery plays of the M1ddle Ages and then through these Elizabethan plays that dep1cted Jews as greedy usurers who valued their wealth more than any individual's life. According to Meyers, it does not matter if the popular dep1ction of the Jews is incorrect; the people will believe what they see and hear on stage because it is reinforced by popular myth. Meyers also argues that the Lopez trial and his execution in 1594 were influenced by Marlowe's play, of which Meyers says, *"[t]he Jew of Malta* became the biggest theatrical hit until that time, and fed the anti-Jew1sh hysteria that prompted the mob to laugh so heartily at Lopez on the gallows." So rather than merely benefiting from the execution's publicity, Marlowe's play

fed anti-Semitic Opinion, and perhaps, even led to the execution of an innocent man. This belief that Marlowe's play can still feed anti-Semitism is one reason why It 1S rarely produced today.

Marion D. Perret's discussion of the problems that plague a staging of *The Merchant of Venice* is also applicable to any staging of *The Jew of Malta.* In her essay, "Shakespeare's Jew: Preconception and Performance," Perrett suggests that "most in his [Shakespeare's] audience thought Jews coldhearted usurers and crnc1fiers of Christ" and so "playgoers would take for granted ways in which the presentation of the Jew fit their preconce1ved image." Thus, if the audience expects to see Shylock (or by extension Barabas) as representing an anti-Semitic real1ty, then the production w1ll reinforce that view. Accordingly, the struggle for the director is how to make a modern production of Shakespeare's Jew more palatable to the audience. The problem, Perret suggests, in staging a modern production of *The Merchant of Venice* 1S to create sympathy for Shylock. As a result, productions "are often shaped defensively" to deal with the audience's "assumption of fear that the play 1S anti-Semitic." This is the same issue that any modern production of *The Jew of Malta* must face. Perret suggests that a twentieth-century audience is "scarred by modern persecution of the Jews, [which] encourages a st11bborn tendency to see this Jew [Shylock] as symbolic of all-Jews." It is, therefore, impossible to separate the tragedy of anti-Semitism from the dep1ctiOn of Jews in plays taken from a sixteenthcent11ry world and transported into a modern world. The result of tills trend is that Barabas becomes more than an evil man who does evil things, but becomes evil because he 1S a Jew. Th1S may, in fact, be true of Marlowe's play, since Barabas is essentially a one-dimensional caricature of a Jew. This concern, says Perrett, "strikes a sens1tive spot in playgoers haunted by memories of the Holocaust."

An additional problem, according to Perrett, is the tendency of theatergoers to view all characters on stage as representative of a group. Thus, "playgoers may perceive an unflattering representation of this particular Jew as an unflattering representation of all Jews and mistreatment of the Jew by other characters as mistreatment by the playwright".

Modern productions of Shakespeare's play cut dialogue to eliminate anti-Semitism and make Shylock more tragic and sympathetic. In other cases, modern productions have made the Christians more evil, to mitigate the Jewish portrait of evil. Neither of these approaches would work well With *The Jew of Malta.* Barabas' dialogue is too frequently anti-Semitic to eliminate, since It encompasses a significant amount of the play And Marlowe has already cast the Christians as evil; however, against the greater evil of Barabas, the negative depiction of the Christians is almost negated.

One different approach to staging Marlowe's play was a 1997 attempt to cast the playas a way to create meaningful dialogue about anti-Semitism. In an interview with Carolyn D. Williams, Stevie Simkin discusses her attempts to force the audience to rethink the anti-Semitism in *The Jew of Malta.* Williams relates that this 1997 production of Marlowe's play was situated in 1939 Warsaw as a play-within-a-play The premise is that the Nazis are presenting *The Jew of Malta* as Nazi propaganda. In staging the play,

Simkin decided one way to counter the play's anti-Semitism was to confront it openly and so, "the Marlowe play was placed inside that 1939 context, as a performance initiated by the Nazi authorities, with the roles of the Christians... performed by German soldiers and the Jewish roles by Jewish interns." With this setting, the play-within-a-play concept would force the audience to see anti-Semitism at its most destructive. Simkin suggests that "The reconfiguration of the play in these terms was designed to open up the text in performance so that it could be used to explore issues of ethnic identity and oppression. In addition, it invited a reappraisal of the implications of reviving Ideologically fraught texts such as *The Jew of Malta* in our time." Simkin uses Marlowe's play to create a meaningful dialogue about anti-Semitism that suggests the importance of change, rather than to just ignore the playas an anti-Semitic production that is somehow too antiquated for the modern stage. By using this format, Simkin offers a way to fight back against the anti-Semitism of the play. For instance, the actors portraying Jewish prisoners were given the means to fight their oppressors. In the section containing Marlowe's satire on the Catholic cleric, "we appropriated it as a satire improvised by the Jews, a joke at the expense of the Christians who had forced them to perform in this anti-Semitic play." She adds a line to the play, spoken by one of the Jewish prisoners: "We are your prisoners, and we shall play. But you cannot make us be what you think we are." In this case, the Jewish prisoners are empowered, rather than diminished by their experience.

Simkin's model for this production was an actual Nazi performance of *The Merchant of Venice,* in Vienna in the 1940s that including a racist caricature of Shylock. Tills Nazi production was to be used as anti-Semitic propaganda. However, in adding her own purpose to Marlowe's play, Simkin rewrites the ending to "confront the play with its own anti-Semitism." She denies Ferneze the play's final lines, which seem to give God credit for the death of Barabas Instead, the actors reject their roles, and the audience is given an opportunity to reject the anti-Semitism of the play. Clearly, any attempt at a modern production of *The Jew of Malta* is handicapped by the destructive force of anti-Semitism in the twentieth century. But perhaps Simkin's production also teaches that there is a way to use tills material to teach important lessons about this topic.

Source: Sheri E Metzger, Critical Essay on *The Jew of Malta,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Kermode explores Marlowe's and other playwrights' Jewish characters as agents of social criticism in English theater in the late sixteenth century.

When the London theatergoers of the 1590s made the short river trip to the South Bank, they left behind them a place which displayed certain fixed features (infrastructure, Protestant Christian ideology), and a place where the lives of the lawmakers and law-followers were affected by the political machinations of international relations and historical placement (tension between London and Spain, proximity to the economically and ideologically important Netherlands). Where they went, to the Rose or the Globe, were places with fixed features (the walls, the stage, the galleries, Protestant Christian ideology) and where the lives of those who performed, those who were portrayed, and those who watched were affected by the political and religious machinations in England and abroad (the sensitivity of the Master of the Revels, dramatic fashion). 'They left the city of London and reconvened in a "second city," the theater.

In this paper I shall show how one of the satirical political dramatist's most cunning weapons was put to work in this "second City," and how the location of the amphitheaters-geographical, social, and ideological -paradoxically both intensified the potentiality of the damage this weapon could inflict, yet also cushioned the city of London from the influential power of the drama. This weapon was simply one of the dramatist's characters, the figure of the male Jew-an outsider, a stranger, an objective commentator and subversive critic, willing to fight against the sociopolitical system represented on the stage. Robert Wilson, Shakespeare, Chapman, William Haughton, and Marston all wrote plays in which a Jewish or Jew-like character played a leading role; and in all these cases, the Jew carries out the function of social critic, sometimes passive and meek, often angry and loud. My familiar example will be the Jew of Malta, Barabas, and his slave, Ithamore.

As an outsider, in terms of religion, nationality, and (often enforced) professional occupation, the Jew on the late-sixteenth-century stage becomes the center of a larger critique. He becomes the criticizer of the state of the city and of the ruling classes at large, and also the target of the audience' s-both on stage and off-judgment against him I will go on to investigate how such an alien figure can resemble a "hero," and in order to justify the suggestions of analogy and transference from stage representation to the "real world" that I will make, we should consider a little further the theater/audience/city relationship at the Rose in 1592.

That the amphitheaters were divided from the city, at a distance outside the walls, meant that the theatergoers could physically exit the contained city ideologies of London Steven Mullaney blurs something of this simple yet important concept when he terms the suburbs "Liberties" as well as the real liberties of the city. What happened during the migration of persons between the two cities, London and amphitheater, is this: knowing themselves to be the very definition of the city (cities are described by population figures), and the subjects and therefore very perpetuators of ideology, the playgoers

deconstruct the city of London without destroying it. The city of London as an ideological concept in the minds of the theatergoers is kept in limbo. Once in the South Bank theater these subjects, pieces of the city structure, possess a vital distance from the city, and the subsequent reconstruction of their community is an affirmation of this group's own Identity as different from the city, but inextricably of the city, they are able to leave London, reconvene, and avoid the city authorities, but their points of reference in play-making, their Judgmental forces, will continually refer back to their conditioning as Londoners.

I

'The very idea of the Jew on the late-sixteenth century stage makes the use of this figure as an associate of the Christian audience alarming, cunning, and subversive. What is set up in *The Jew of Malta* is something that will be far less certain in *The Merchant of Venice* when it appears several years later. Barabas is a villain precisely because he is a Jew, and therefore the term "Jew" will suffice to presuppose all other villainous attributes. Something of the status of the appellation might be gleaned from the episode in which Pilia-Borza and Bellamira arrange with Ithamore to get money from Barabas. Ithamore begins the demand letter "Master/Barabas", Pilia-Borza tells him, "Write not so submissively, but threatening him" and so Ithamore restarts, "Sirrali Barabas." When Pilia-Borza returns with the news that Barabas has supposedly only given him ten crowns instead of the demanded three hundred, Ithamore thinks of the most contemptuous way to demand more money. His letter begins "Sirrah Jew."

Shylock, on the other hand, has reason for what he does. Whether It is good reason or not, it is certainly logical, and the Christians find themselves in need of a good (non-Venetian) mouthpiece to argue for their side. This mouthpiece, Portia, is another example of a figure from without who critiques the State she or he enters into, a State that to a greater or lesser extent marginalizes that character. Note that this critic is not impartial, not in the least objective, simply, that critic-figure must engage the audience, so that the audience effectively "sees" through her or his eyes. This figure acts as a kind of guide to lead the audience through the stage world. This is the role played by Barabas. But Marlowe's weapon is so much more powerful, the relativity of the grievances so much more intriguing because, unlike Portia, Barabas is a hateful character, a Jew; yet he wins an audience's empathy.

Marlowe gives nothing away at the beginning. We surely Cannot guess that soon we will consider seriously the appropriateness of the Jew's subversive message and methods. The introduction of Barabas is a blatant taunting device-' *'in his counting-house, with heaps of gold before him"* Barabas laments "what a trouble 'tis to count this trash!". He may signal to the audience in the yard as he says "The needy groom that never fingered groat / Would make a miracle of thus much coin," and goes on to lament the money-counting chore a second time. In his little counting-house, rich and bitter, wealthy and boasting, perhaps wearing "the artificiall Jewe of Maltae's nose" and traditional red wig denoting a traitor against Jesus, he is the archetypal villain.

If the audience knows only that he is a Jew at this point, they know by line 49 that he is not just any Jew, but Barabas, aurally the same as the robber and murderer who was freed in Christ's place That the audience is aware of this name's relevance is confirmed by Barabas's instruction and ironic question to the merchant in the opening scene, "Go tell 'em the Jew of Malta sent thee, man; / Tush, *who amongst' em knows not Barabas* ?', (my emphasis). We should make a distinction here between the use of the Jew as a representative of Barabas, and the use of the Jew as a representative of Judas. Although standing for the anti-Christian race, this Jew of Malta does not stand for the specific betrayer, the damned Antichrist. A similar effect upon the audience of anti-Christianism, but not "Antichrist-ism," may occur when Shylock says of his daughter "Would any of the stock of Barabbas /Had been her husband rather than a Christian!"

Barabas names himself here, then, but that naming paradoxically takes away from specific identity, rather than adding to It. It only places him in a category. Stephen Greenblatt has spotted a conflict of Identity in Barabas, a tug-of-war between hidden psychology and what is openly declared While plying an individuality through his self-alienating, and his exemplary "self-fashioning" behavior, Barabas is also falling into the trap of becoming a personification of a concept, not of a human being. "Most dramatic characters-Shylock would be an appropriate *example-accumulate* Identity in the course of their play; Barabas desperately tries to dispossess himself of such Identity. But this steady erosion of himself is precisely what he has pledged himself to resist; his career, then, is in its very essence suicidal.' ,

The erosion of identity of the antagonists is an ancient requirement for tragedy. Rene Guard seems absolutely correct when he writes that "violence invariably effaces the differences between antagonists." Barabas erodes lus own identity through paradoxical self-nomenclature, disguises (apparel, drugs), and association (Ithamore, the Turks, the Maltese), and through violence he and his enemies are made all but indistinguishable. The audience will be left in a quandary: whether to support the admirable efforts of the disgusting Jew or the saving grace of the Popish Catholics.

How the identity of Barabas is seemingly "fattened out," made particular, is by teaming him up with a partner in crime, who will shadow Barabas and imitate his evil. Ithamore is from "Thrace; brought up in Arabia." Barabas puts aside the slave he specifically terms "Moor" to choose one who will be credited with the traditional viciousness of a Turk, but with a punning name that reminds the audience of his region of upbringing, neighbor land to the Moorish North Africa; he is a double villain. And Ithamore, like Barabas, is a critical outsider and a stranger in so far as he was not brought up where he was born and is now taken to a foreign land against his will The Turk and the Jew are on England's stage, under the censuring eyes of the recreated "second city" spectators.

Ithamore possesses no loyalties in the conflicts that will occur, but is a pawn, a death-messenger. We could say that we are, ultimately, left with an infidel threat from a rich stranger and his servant, to a Christian strategic stronghold, the city of Malta. This viewpoint estranges the Jew, makes foreign the compact Barabas-Ithamore army, and instructs the audience to take the evil natures of the Jew and the Turk for granted. In doing so the fact of their strangeness becomes at least as Important as their specific

nationality or religion; or rather their equal status as infidels puts to one side the apparently foregrounded scorn for "the Jew," per se. Marlowe gives the audience a fascinating choice over how to view the relationships here: either critical outsiders versus followers of anti-Christ or evil infidels versus Christians.

It is difficult to guess just how much the general theatergoing public knew or cared about the history of Malta and the legacy of the Knights of St John. If reports of the situation in Malta were reaching England in the 1580s, as Godfrey Wettinger claims, the concern of the English that the strategically located Island be sufficiently protected from the Turk must have been mixed. Malta had not seen significant military action Since the Turkish attack of 1565, the great Turkish invasions of Byzantium, Serbia, Morea, and elsewhere occurring in the fifteenth century. But the association of the Jew and the Turk was still a frightening anti-Christian force and the existence of a rich Jew in Malta was a horrendous thought, IT we assume that to be rich is to be powerful.

Of course, It is also Ideologically incorrect to cheer for the Spaniards represented on stage in 1592, and it is in the final act of *The Jew of Malta* that the audience's sympathies are tried. We may not expect an Elizabethan audience to be converted to the cause of Barabas; and neither should our modern sensitivities mislead us on the question of whether we expect them to object to the ferocity of Barabas's punishment when his entire estate was taken from him, for Barabas responds with disgusting verve

To be sure, his murder of a friar and poisoning of a whole convent involve the comedy of the assassin set upon popIsh victims, and play with the tradition of the corrupt or suspect figure of the friar, but this part of the drama remains within the secure realm of the "play world." Where the audience's "real world" understanding of the figure will come from is the fact that the audience possesses a specific, analogical situation It is located historically in 1592 and spatially outside the city walls. Steven Mullaney notes the parallel of the theatrical fictional and physical situation' Barabas outside Malta's walls, and the theater outside London's walls.

As I engage now with the analysis of a particular dramatic moment to put these proposals of place, relationship, and effect into practice, I should call a character witness to support my isolation of a scene for use as illustrative material. Yurim Lotman has said that "the analogy between painting and theatre was manifested above all in the organization of the spectacle through conspicuously pictorial means of artistic modelling, in that the stage text tended to unfold not as a continuous flux (non 'discrete') imitating the passage of time in the extra-artistic world, but as a whole clearly broken up into single 'stills' organized synchronically, each of which is set within the decor like a picture in a frame." The tune-abstracted picture on which Mullaney, and now I, dwell is presented to the audience in the theater's frame, and shows Barabas thrown "o'er the walls." He wakes from the drugs he has taken to feign death and stands alone, the single unheard middle-ranking professional. He is at this moment both physically and socially (as a Jew and a foreigner) an outsider. As such he is free to begin to decide on a way to reenter the city on his own terms, using the double level of Identity that each audience member possesses-that of individual subject to the city, and ideological reinventor when outside the city boundary. He must use his knowledge of the city (his

"inextricable link") and also his distance (outside of the walls) to create the *critical act-the* player attempting a "re-semblance" of the personal character that exists without the structure and stricture of the city law.

This display of potentially subversive originality can be seen by an ideology locked *within* a city only as acting an unnatural part. In the South Bank theater the concept of the suburbs and of the danger of individual mental and physical liberty at this point becomes most highly charged. The whole purpose of creating a *text* of laws and proclamations within a jurisdiction is to ensure conformity and equal behavioral *acts* from its subjects If the subject leaves that Jurisdiction, she or he is free to reassess laws. Exiting an ideology (or even more simply exiting a safe, if oppressive community) to create such an original, de-legalized character produces a being who must in the end, like Barabas, be , 'all alone' , ; alone but with a charismatic power that dissatisfied Londoners might yearn for in this dark economic period. This character's deconstruction of the city body (by the removal of himself) is a way to reanalysis and affirmation of his self as potential whole thinker and act-er. It is an analogue of the audience's deconstruction of the city structure and reestablishment in the theater.

Multiple or *en masse* recognition of the place of the oppressed individual subject, possible only in the theater, is the beginning of the route to a common effective reaction against the city from without. It is the first step on a subversive path that leads right to the lawmakers and monarchs of the city or realm being critiqued.

II

It appears at first, then, that individuality is encouraged through the subjects' exiting from London, that we are seeing individuals in the audience being excited by the strongly individual character of Barabas. But in fact the theater creates a world in which the playgoers are homogenous analogues to the Jew. They may have a personal reaction to Barabas's display, but this reaction is a product of communal fashioning-it is the theater audience's reaction as a whole. This is not an encouraging concept for the human narcissistic and independence-loving psyche, but it would be, for many critics, the quintessential metamorphosis of the audience, allowing a common reception to dramatic stimuli, and so creating a serious anti-authoritarian, united force. Paul Yachnin, in his useful essay,

"The Powerless Theater," denies this possibility:

In the theater of the period, political meaning was depoliticized, either by being contained within the aesthetic form as merely the indeterminate subject of Imaginative representation or by being made the product of the audience's reception of the text rather than the product of the text Itself The stage's representation of the operations of power was normally not allowed to coalesce in the land of univocal and authorized meaning which might be seen as an attempt to intervene in the real world.

Like Barabas's naming of himself at the beginning of the play, the playgoers' renaming of themselves as a theater crowd does not create specific identity; it only shifts their membership affiliation between two related categories, London city and theater city.

It is this two-fold, interdependent audience identity, I would argue, and not the weakness of drama and theater itself, which lessens dramatic political power. For in 1592 the stage was still potentially dangerous. In the theater of Marlowe, the aesthetic form of political action is not embellished or softened into an "indeterminate object of imaginative representation," but is cold, rapid display-the siege of the town cannot even be shown on the stage, It is so factual and real; the scaffold of Barabas's death is built and mastered as a new stage of death-simple, clean, quick, deadly, subversive, political.

We must reconsider the widespread concern among critics to try to prove power inherent within the theater and dramatic performance, to find a "univocal and authorized meaning which might be seen as an attempt to intervene in the real world."

The play is all power game, all control mechanism, manipulating the audience; the play world is already in the real world, and should affect it. Where the problem lies, why the *should* is not a *will,* is in the fact that the audience in London city and the audience III theater City cannot entirely dislocate themselves, and a univocal meaning (or even an oversimplified authorization: to fight, to overturn, to die) falls however potently onto the ears of au audience fashioned too much by just that real world and ultimately unable to go out of the theater and act against it. It is not "the audience's reception" that we should be concerned with, but audience retention, necessary for audience action.

Thomas Cartelli's proposal that "in *The Jew of Malta* Marlowe provokes only minimal resistance to the enjoyment his version of burlesque affords" does not matter. This not enough for the play to be "a collective fantasy getting out of hand." The play can assume all the powerful roles in the world. But for the play-goers to accept Barabas as their permanent hero, their subversive role model, they must reject London's ideology wholesale-not only its suppression of domestic protest, but also the long-assumed hatred for the "infidel". It is with such an ideologically cleared mind that the theatergoers subsequently would have to return to London, if they were to effect change in their personal situations *as a result of the play.* But such a reaction against what have largely become accepted, even If questioned, ideological norms is a lot to ask.

We must investigate further how Marlowe wheedles his critical Jew into the favor of the audience, aud moreover how this can only remain a local effect, one that disintegrates with the breaking-up of the audience at the end of the play. Calymath enters to the wakened and vengeful Barabas, who proclaims "My name is Barabas; I am a Jew." The dramatic irony of the line is hilarious, for the audience can see that he is a Jew; even in the fictional image Calymath should be able to see that he is a Jew. Barabas even reveals his name before the obvious statement. And finally, as if teasing, as if he knew all along, Calymath recognizes Barabas's fame: "Art thou that Jew whose goods we heard were sold / For tribute-money?" "The very same, my lord," Barabas replies. Barabas, now outside the walls, now alone in a personal quest for revenge against the

city, appears through this irony to be rebuilding the identity that he falsely set up at the beginning, a shield of nomenclature from behind which to fight. This self-reintroduction by Barabas so late in the play, rapidly followed by his plan for taking the city, should be the ultimate pIece of effective "self-fashioning." But as Stephen Greenblatt reminds us, "Naming oneself is not enough; one must also name and pursue a goal. [Marlowe's] heroes do so with a splendid energy that distinguishes their words as well as their actions from the surrounding society. The Turks, friars, and Christian knights may all be driven by 'The wind that bloweth all the world besides,/ Desire of gold' , but only Barabas can speak of 'infinite riches in a little roome'" But even this is not good enough. Barabas is talking ill riddle s. His "infinite riches" are, of course, unattainable, and this will be proven at the end of the play-at the end of all life

As Cartelli insists, this scene certainly "provokes" the audience. The niggling fact that the Maltese city that wronged Barabas is one governed by Spanish-ruled Catholics makes its undermining-in the fiction of this play-a not unattractive proposal for the London audience. And undermining is literally what the Turks and Barabas do. They reenter the city via its sewers; they take revenge on the city emblematically in that they return through the channels that should only allow effluent to leave the jurisdiction-they are therefore dangerous excess to the city's safety, the city's political filth infecting the city structure.

Back inside the Maltese city, Barabas and the Turks avenge as iconoclasts, usurping the figures of supposed justice, rising up "dirtily" from physically-and by metaphor socially-"below" the city. The actor on stage is setting an example for the audience, but the message is not stable. As Michael Goldman has said, , 'We are made sharply aware of the actor both activating an icon and altering It"; manipulation is the name of the game.

III

Scene ii of the final act opens with the assault having succeeded. Magically, off-stage, in the "theatrical space without," the city of the Spanish crusaders is violated. Hanna Scolnicov writes:

The founding of Rome [in Ovid's *Fasti]* is described as a cutting-off and consecrating of a particular space. According to Ehade, city walls were originally erected not for military protection but as a magical defence,

for they marked out from the midst of a "chaotic" space, peopled with demons and phantoms, an enclosure, a place that was organized, provided with a "centre".

The sacred circle, cut off and delimited, consecrated and Imbued with strength and Significance, is highly suggestive in relation to the theatrical space.

If the theater is its own "organised" space, it is truly a "second city": a walled, organized location, of life-stories, parts of which others experience, relate, or miss completely. There is more. The idea of magical defense reflects the reliance of the theater on illusion-the Illusion of protection (that the Essex conspirators trusted to), of autonomy,

and of power within the theatrical (architectural) space. The theater is an alternative not only to the geographical city space but also to the city ideology. It is a "sacred" alternative to the religious requirement of the official ideological apparatus; the trend to contrast the theater with a church or with schools, theaters being places of ungodly learning, was perhaps a more profound observation than many contemporary writers realized.

We are shown that Barabas's method of entry has left the city walls physically intact. His self enclosure in the city is his suicidal version of "the constant attempt by characters within the plays to control, imprison, and wall up one another, while maintaining to themselves the fiction of breaking boundaries down." *Intention-success* (performance of the intended action) is possible, but *purpose-success* (achievement of the desired end) is ultimately not. The overthrow of the oppressor does not result in finality; revolution is not a stable condition So, ultimately, despite all the promise, the theatergoers are not given a way to hold the city from within. The Machiavellian element may be involved in the successful siege, but is really confirmed with typical Marlovian sleight-of-hand in the successful princehood and protection of the fortress by Ferneze. The power of drama gulls the audience. Barabas's victory is temporary, even illusory. His greed will cause a final self-destructive attempt at gain and glory and the Catholic Christians will regain the city; their sacred wall-the Religious State Apparatus-remains intact too. The two enclosures, city and theater, remain discrete and undamaged.

Rebecca W. Bushnell is near to the mark with her summary *of Tamburlaine I* and *II* and *The Jew of Malta* as "plays that explore the craving for power and the strategies of usurpation. None of these plays concerns the exercise of power as tyranny; instead, each play displays the Spectacle of ambition." She continues:

In *The Jew of Malta,* when Barabas is Installed as governor, he seems momentarily confused; like Tamburlaine, he understands only need and not its fulfillment, so when he seeks "for much, but [can] not compass It," it is because he cannot bear to be "compassed" Having achieved authority, Barabas almost immediately collapses, and one of his own, 'engines" backfires on him In the logic of represent ing amb1tion in these plays, the conclusion is not morally motivated, the action just grinds to a halt when desire is exhausted.

Stephen Greenblatt has blamed Barabas's failure on "his desire to *avoid* the actual possession of power." Indeed, by keeping the horizon of his power struggle exactly that-an ever-escaping sight ("infinite riches")-Barabas avoids having to hold on to the reality of power, avoids the inevitability of having to impose limits on his power (hence the dreadful mistake inherent in walling himself in the city). Tamburlaine similarly sees infinite space left to conquer as he peruses a map in his final hours of life. Peter S. Donaldson says of Tamburlaine's reception of the tactile crown:

The crown is necessary here not because Tamburlaine has any real sense of the earthly fruition he claims It represents, but because one must tom to *something* from the chaotic reflection of man's essence In nature, from warring elements, wandering planets, reflecting inner weariness and aimless oscillation. Marlowe mentions the

"wondrous architecture" of the world, but what he presents is not an ordered universe, but rather one that mirrors the disorder of a fragmented self. To aim at the crown is really to tom away from the chaos of nature to a realm of willed coherence. The speech passes from images of fragmenting "natural" energies to the stable but ironic self-icon of the crown.

Barabas is the alternative power seeker. His "willed coherence" is strong, but his "aimless oscillation" is revealed in his final fail into the cauldron. Barabas does have a real sense of the earthly fruition that he claims his power signifier money-represents, but he cannot grasp the reality of power itself. The chase is more thrilling--and less tiresome-than holding on to the struggling catch called the power of rule. His ordered intention is reflected in his carefully constructed execution scaffold upon the stage; but his desire for avoidance of final power-the *purpose-success-makes* this scaffold another "self-Icon," the rebuilt ("revolutionary," reinstating, return to the original) power structure.

What is provided for the audience is only the suggestion that from without the city can be challenged. There is no dramatic force that can scale the walls and overturn tills "real world." In the end political subversion is within the power of the theater, but it cannot be converted to revolution inside the city by the audience, who must be the agents of any such process. But we may not like this ending. It is depressing. So we come back at it with dramatic subversion like the *Isle of Dogs* affair, or the incidents surrounding *The Play of Sir Thomas More.* Or we cite the Dutch Church libel, with its "Machiavellian Merchant," its "Paris massacre" and its marginal "Tamburlaine," a prime example of a political text born of social and political dissatisfaction, of the force of knowledge of foreign affairs, and of the power of Marlowe's particular seminar in subversion at the "schoole of abuse" called the Rose.

But the Dutch Church Libel was a sheet pinned up in the primary city (London), that having stated its dramatic influences from the second city of performance (the Rose), remains a text that hints at revolutionary, subversive, individualistic possibility, yet in reality confirms only nationalistic and xenophobic homogeneity. Full of plans and threats-like Barabas-the text has lost its ability to turn into action somewhere in the "passage" between the theater and the streets of London.

Source: Lloyd E. Kermode, 'Marlowe's Second City': The Jew as Critic at the Rose in 1592," in *Studies in English Literature,* Vol. 35, No 2, Spring 1995, pp 215-26.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Humphreys contrasts The Jew of Malta *with Shakespeare's* The Merchant of Venice, *focusing on the differing philosophies expressed* in *them.*

Whenever *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice* are staged in close juxtaposition (as in the 1965 summer season at Stratford-upon-Avon, the role of the great Jew in both being superbly taken by Enc Porter), the audience is vividly provoked to reflect on two radically differing sorts of dramatic mind. The plays, it is true, have much in common. In both, riches and the power they confer are a theme to be explored. In both, the traffic of the world and the excitement of exotic places offer imaginative enlargement far beyond what is actually seen: this is an instance of that "emotion of multitude" which W. B. Yeats defined as "the rich, far-wandering, many-imaged life of the half-seen world [beyond] the little limited life of the fable"-a sense of mysterious range essential, Yeats thought, to all great art. In both plays a victimized Jew seeks bloody revenge against a professedly but questionably "Christian" world (each man, in E. IN. W. Tillyard's phrase, "utterly and irretrievably the alien") and in so doing is felt to have a case. In both, a virtuous daughter abandons her grasping father for a . 'Chris tian" allegiance and is execrated: and in both, in a sensational *Coup de theatre,* the villain falls on the threshold of triumph. Shakespeare owes Marlowe much, both in the choice of material and in the many echoes which show how his assimilative ear had taken the rich suggestiveness of his contemporary's style.

Yet the differences are profound. Marlowe cuts a single-minded and powerful cleft through his startling material. Shakespeare, myriad-minded and richly humane, explores the varying shades and colors which make up human nature. Marlowe, in a play impelled by the dynamism of duplicities, rivets us to the intense theme of vengeful outwitting.

Shakespeare, with seemingly nonchalant daring, interweaves two plots, the one a fairy tale romance of quick courtship wherein, for once, the course of true love does run smooth, the Other a drama of hatred on a time scale of slow, increasing danger, and so skillfully does he relate the quick romance and the slow potential tragedy that instead of incoherence he offers a rich experience of love and suffering together, the love enhanced by heartfelt concern, the danger stunningly averted by love's skill, while, like a musical composition, the play extends our feelings widely by its interrelationship of contrasts. A telling comment is that of John Russell Brown, in *Shakespeare and his Comedies,* reminding us how flexibly we must adjust to what Shakespeare sets before us:

Shakespeare does not simply contrive a contrast of black and white, a measured interplay of abstract figures with every detail fining into a predetermined pattern. The lovers are not all paragons, and Shylock's cry for revenge is not without 'a kind of wild justice'. Judged against Shakespeare's ideal of love's wealth we cannot doubt on which side our sympathies should rest, but such final harmony is only established after we have judged, as in life, between mixed motives and imperfect responses. Even when

the central theme has been recognized, *The Merchant of Venice* is not an 'easy' play: it presents a plot to which we must respond as to a golden ideal, and also as to a human action.

The difference between the two dramatists is analogous to that which, in *Table Talk* of 12 May 1830, Coleridge defined as between Shakespeare and Milton-Shakespeare the creator working from within his material, letting it grow seemingly by laws of its own origination (and so, as critics observe, akin to nature herself), Milton the creator Imposing on his material his own mind and temper, dominating the artifact by his personality. Shakespeare, Coleridge observed, is the Spinozistic deity, an omnipresent creativeness. Milton is the deity of prescience; he stands *ab extra* and drives a fiery chariot and four, making the horses feel the lion curb which holds them in.

Marlowe would stand with Milton, as he does too in magniloquence and in daring and grandeur of idea. His nature urged him to project his own reading of life, and the personality stamped on the artifact is demonstrative and willful Tamburlaine, the Guise, Faustus, Barabas confront us in the strongest way, head-on. As a heterodox thinker Marlowe has affinities with Herman Melville-restless in enquiry, free-thinking, convinced that the universe has meaning, however ambiguous it may be, and noting with grim and sardonic zest the difference between what men profess and what they do. T. S. Eliot called Marlowe "the most thoughtful, the most blasphemous (and therefore probably the most Christian) of his contemporaries." Marlowe was no more a moral anarchist than Melville was. Both were given to rebellious extravagance, yet both were bound by deep intuitions to show rebels destroyed by the very anarchy of rebelliousness. They ultimately assert-not the hypocrisies of orthodoxy but the humanist sense of moral law In *The Jew of Malta* the virtue of Barabas' daughter Abigail shines like a good deed in a naughty world; It had been the mission of the original Abigail (of 1 Samuel, chapter 25) to turn David from vengeance to a heaven-blessed peace (though Marlowe's Abigail signally fails to soften her vindictive parent).

Yet what corresponded most profoundly to Marlowe's instincts was not the retributive doom which smites Tamburlaine, or the divinity which condemns Faustus, or the critique of Machiavellism (as sensationalized by the Elizabethans) which lies behind *The Jew of Malta,* but the excitement of rebellious unorthodoxy. As with Shakespeare over Richard of Gloucester, or Jonson over Volpone, or Melville over Ahab, it is defiant individualism which exerts the supreme spell. Tamburlaine invokes Zeus' rebellion against Kronos/Saturn to prove that Nature "doth teach us all to have aspiring minds." Marlowe's enemies reported his blasphemies with horror-blasphemies such as that "the first beginning of religion was only to keep men in awe," or that "Christ deserved better to die than Barabas." "Almost into every company he cometh," Richard Baines testified, "he persuades men to atheism." Allowance being made for bravado, Marlowe looks less an atheist than a deist or *libertin* (not that the distinction would have mollified Barnes). Barabas has his God, of sorts, and calls on him as First Mover, *Primus Motor.* But it is of the nature of *Primus Motor* that, having set things going, he withdraws himself: in *The Jew* Marlowe offers a world wound up as by clockwork to go through its cycle of amoralities. And even when the play ends with specious piety

Come, march away, and let due praise be given
Neither to Fate nor Fortune, but to Heaven□
this figures only as satire on hypocritical
"Christianity"

Marlowe's hero owes something, though only as rollicking travesty, to a princely and famous Jewish merchant-banker-diplomat, Joao Miquez or Mendez, Portuguese by birth, a handsome and brilliant man whose financial power was felt throughout the Mediterranean world and who, setting up in the Jewish community of Constantinople, exerted a central influence on the Sultan's diplomacy. His renown spread through Europe and the Near East; rumors of almost superhuman subtlety and adroitness ran through the sixteenth-century corridors of power. The size of his fleets, the power of His wealth, and the complications of his diplomacy fascinated the imagination as far away from Constantinople as London, where Marlowe could have heard about him in the circles of politics and business. Mendez differs from Barabas as much as a merchant-prince-diplomat might be expected to differ from an Elizabethan dramatic bogeyman-Machiavellian; yet the notion of politic trickery in the context of Mediterranean traffic and war set Marlowe's invention excitedly at work. So also did the notion of Machiavellism, the idea that man could control His circumstances provided he operated without moral limitation. The Machiavelli who speaks Marlowe's prologue may have been prompted by a Latin epigram by Gabriel Harvey, supposedly spoken by MacInavel1I himself, which, translated, melodramatically concludes:

Alone I scheme, live, triumph for myself.
Who knows not the rest? Fraud is my
chiefest quality:
The next, Force; I know no other gods.
Peruse *The Prince,* that monument of my spirit,
No longer will you ask who Machiavelli was.

With respect to Elizabethan drama, what Machiavelli was really after has little to do with the case. What he was thought to be after was political diabolism, and what appealed to popular taste was the thrill of gleeful and imperious villainy, the motive of Lorenzo in *The Spanish Tragedy,* Aaron in *Titus Andronicus,* Edmund in *King Lear,* and that Richard of Gloucester who, knowing "neither pity, love, nor fear," professes that he can

Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could.
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school
Like Lorenzo in *The Spanish Tragedy*
I'll trust myself; myself shall be my friend
and like Richard of Gloucester
I have no brother, I am like no brother,
And this word 'love', which greybeards
call divine,
Be resident in men like one another
And not in me' I am myself alone

Barabas stands for *himself-"Ego mihimet sum semper proximus"* -soliloquizing that

Barabas is born to better chance,
And framed of finer mould than common men
That measure naught but by the present time
A reaching thought will search his deepest wits,
And cast with cunning for the time to come.

Renaissance Man came in various models-Calvinistic (depraved, unless redeemed by divine grace), temperate and orthodox (the Spenserian model), the prodigious *(l'uomo singulare),* and so on. The prodigious was the type Marlowe went for, and since prodigies cannot be moderate, violence went with them, in flings of primitive and heroic ruthlessness. This is the spirit in which one of the greatest of Marlowe' s individualists expresses himself, the guise of *The Massacre at Paris:*

Oft have I levelled, and at last have learned
That peril is the chiefest way to happiness,
And resolution honour's fairest aim.
What glory is there in a common good
That hangs for every peasant to achieve?
That like I best that flies beyond my reach
Set me to scale the high Pyramides
And thereon set the diadem of France, I'll either rend it
with my nails to naught,
Or mount the top
with my aspiring wings,
Although my downfall be the deepest hell

Burckhardt, in his *Civilization of the Renaissance* in *Italy,* evokes the Renaissance individualist in terms that define this conception, and Barabas in particular:

The fundamental vice of His character was at the same time a condition of its greatness, namely, excessive individualism The individual first inwardly casts off the authority of the state which, in fact, is in most cases tyrannical and illegitimate, and what he thinks and does is, rightly or wrongly, now called treason.

The sight of victorious egotism mothers drives him to defend his own right by his own ann. And, while thinking to restore His inward equilibrium, he falls, through the vengeance which he executes, into the hands of the powers of darkness. He retains the feeling of His own sovereignty and forms his decision independently, according as honour or interest, passion or calculation, revenge or renunciation, gain the upper hand in his own mind

This conception, at a time when outrage was rife, when torture was the order of the day, when poisoners-a precedent for Barabas' fate-might be boiled alive (there are striking pages on this in Leon Radzinowicz's *History of Criminal Law),* and when assassination was not the act of hate-crazed maniacs but a recognized weapon of state policy-this

conception, when worked out in *Tamburlaine* or *The Jew of Malta,* need not be attributed, as Mario Praz once did, to Marlowe's "cold, gloating lust" for cruelty. Indeed, there is a rich quarry of colorful violences in the medieval romances which the Elizabethans read, and the popularity of which Louis Wright amply demonstrated in *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England.* Barabas' outrageous and farcical crimes in pursuit of vengeance engrossed the fancy at a time when the supposed diabolism of Machiavellian policy and Mediterranean villainy were implicitly believed in, and shocking brutalities officially practiced.

But first Barabas appears not as the ingenious villain but as the prince of riches. A crown, he admits, is beyond his grasp; that must be left to Christians, "That thirst so much for principality." Instead, Machiavelli informs us, he smiles to see how full His bags are crammed, Which money was not got without my means

Piling up gold, exasperated with counting-house minutiae, avid for endless accumulation, he lets his mind range the world to dwell on those dignitaries-Arabian, Moorish, East Indian-whose wealth comes not in individual coins but in wedges and masses of gold, and jewels so uncountable that, rare and precious though they be, they are sold in gross. Moving his plies of gold in his counting-house he relates them to his Persian ventures, to traders of Italy and Palestine bringing Spanish oils and Grecian wines, and then, his spirits soaring, he rates gold and jewels as means to glory and power, resources "To ransom great kings from captivity," "Infinite riches in a little room." Marlowe's verse retains the swing, the opulence, and the melodies of Tamburlaine's "mighty line," in, for instance,

Give me the merchants of the Indian mines,
That trade in metal of the purest mould,
The wealthy Moor, that in the eastern rocks
Without control can pick His riches up,
And in His house heap pearl like pebble-stones

But a greater dramatic expressiveness breaks through, superior to the large magniloquence of *Tamburlaine.* (If *Dr Faustus* preceded *The Jew of Malta,* then of course an enormous development in dramatic style had already taken place, outranging anything achieved in *The Jew:* the relative precedence is uncertain.) At any rate, Barabas pilots his way sensuously through his thoughts, rising to the exultancy in which he celebrates the beauty and power of his wealth:

Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,
Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,
Beauteous rubles, sparking diamonds,
And seld-seen costly stones of so great price
As one of them, indifferently rated,
And of a carat of this quantity,
May serve, in peril of calamity,
To ransom great kings from captivity
This is the ware wherein consists my wealth;

And thus, methinks, should men of
Judgment frame
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,
And, as their wealth increaseth, so inclose
Infinite riches in a little room

His soliloquy ending, his mind flows in a sweep of enchanted geography through the melodies of exotic names and luxurious textures:

I hope my ships
I sent for Egypt and the bordering Isles
Are gotten up by Nilus' winding banks
Mine argosy from Alexandria,
Loaden with spice and silks, now under sail,
Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore
To Malta, through our Mediterranean sea

Behind Barabas' wide-stretching imagination there ranges the mercantile zest of Elizabethan England; as Harry Levin comments, "Marlowe has grasped what is truly imaginative, what in his time was almost heroic, about business enterprise." English navigation, Hakluyt observes,

made for the parts of Africa, and either within or without the straits of Gibraltar, within, to Constantinople in Romania, to Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt, and to Tripoli in Barbary, without, to Santa Cruz, to Asafi, to the City of Morocco, to the River of Senegal, to the Isles of Cape Verde, to Guinea, to Benin, and round about the dreadful Cape of Bona Speranza as far as Goa.

In *The Jew of Malta* wealth figures in a single aspect. "The wind that bloweth all the world besides, Desire of gold" -thus does the Basso of the Turks sum up all human motives, as he demands Malta's tribute, a theme already heard from Lorenzo in *The Spanish Tragedy:*

Where words prevail not, violence prevails, But gold doth more than either of them both.

Desire of gold, on the symbolical and almost metaphysical level of Barabas' fantasy, on the political level which makes Maltese and Turks negotiate over tribute, on the economic level which makes the Spaniards put in to market their slaves (and so brings to Barabas his *ame damnee,* Ithamore), or on the hypocritical religious level which makes two friars compete to enrich their respective houses by seeking to convert Barabas-this is the mainspring of the participants, with "policy" and revenge as variants. Marlowe's exhilarated concentration on man as predator gives the play Its comic-horrific force. *Primus Motor* gives his creation the motive of self-interest and then leaves it to the interaction of the forces which that motive provokes. If gold is the world's desire, policy is the world's practice, the rods and cranks of the Machiavellian machine. Quickly the sweep and verve of Barabas' opening monologue, envisioning endless and deserved enrichment

Thus trolls our fortune In by land and sea,
And thus are we on every side enriched
These are the blessings promised to the Jews,
And herein was old Abram's happiness
What more may heaven do for earthly man
Than thus to pour out plenty In their laps,
Ripping the bowels of the earth for them,
Making the seas their servant, and the Winds
To drive their substance With successful blasts?

Quickly this language of prosperity validated by Heaven's bounty to its chosen race turns to anger and revenge under the tyranny and hypocrisy with which the Governor mulcts Barabas of his wealth. Plays of "policy" must have tricky plots-The *Spanish Tragedy, Titus Andronicus, Hamlet, Volpone,* The *Revenger's Tragedy-and* must work for sensation; men stand or fall by their WIts in a treacherous world. Whether as great merchant or ingenious avenger Barabas iS the supreme operator. Yet the professed Christians are-like Richard of Gloucester's cronies and most of his enemies-no better, and act by act Marlowe's inventive gusto shows them up for the double-dealers they are, in a ruthless assessment of society's motives projected through a drama designed to display them with lusty and enjoyable cynicism and great dramatic vitality; It all *tells,* and tells to a single, definable, critical end

How differently, in The *Merchant of Venice,* does Shakespeare conduct material which, superficially, offers a general resemblance. He lets his reading of life (a far richer reading than Marlowe's) reveal itself not in manifestos but in valuations we are moved to make imaginatively within ourselves. If affirmation is Marlowe's habit, Shakespeare-to vary a little the sense of Sidney's phrase in the *Apologie* -"never affirmeth," never, even when Portia discourses on mercy, imposes fixed ideas. Marlowe opens His play with Machiavelli and then at once presents his masterful Jew to stamp his play with the theme of cupidity, as *Richard III'* s opening monologue announces scheming ambition and that of *Volpone* announces blasphemous exorbitance

Shakespeare too at once presents his rich man, but in this case as the soul of beneficence. Antonio never registers with the force of Barabas, let alone of Shylock, but it is not his function to do so He is the center on which the lines of force converge, not (like Barabas) that from which they originate. Love and generosity are the prevailing values of Shakespeare's world of comedy, but he presents *The Merchant of Venice's* moral scheme in a teasingly ambivalent way, while leaving no ultimate doubt of his fundamental valuation. He idealizes goodness in Belmont (yet not without some unideal causticity over the unwanted suitors), varies Venice's predominant geniality with half-understandable harshness to the alien usurer, and concentrates malignancy into one overwhelming figure while yet deeply humanizing that figure. The love and idealism, though conceived in a spirit of romantic idealism, are not sentimental; they recognize antipathy, and Antonio has spat upon Shylock's Jewish gabardine. But characteristically it is the love of friends which first manifests itself (and Shakespeare's opening themes are often significant), a love strangely shadowed, for Antonio is oppressed by a melancholy which puzzles himself and his acquaintance, a melancholy which, if a

logical reason is to be sought for it, seems an unconscious premonition of threatening doom, Antonio's function being to serve selflessly and suffer with a strange submissiveness. But I prefer to think that the melancholy is not to be logically explained but arises from Shakespeare's intuitions about the world of comedy, that beauty and happiness, If unalloyed by something of grief, lose the full complex richness they should have, Portia, too, is afflicted with a weariness which Nerissa seeks to Jest away. The love stones which, as the moonlight sleeps on the garden of Belmont, the happy Lorenzo and Jessica recall-those of Troilus, Thisbe, Dido, and Medea-have all a cast of lyrical grief. In contrast to Marlowe, this is that haunting complexity of mood which makes mature Shakespearean comedy so subtle an experience. How suggestive are Jessica's words to Lorenzo-"I am never merry when I hear sweet music." With these reflective shadowings, yet lightening them all with kindliness and gaiety, Shakespeare reveals His two embodiments of goodness, Antonio in the first scene, Portia in the second It is with these two also that the exotic and romantic wonders so nobly announced in The *Jew of Malta* but so soon withdrawn are realized. It is Antonio's, not Shylock's, "argosies with portly Sall, / like signiors and rich burgers flood," which express the magical traffic of the great city It is Antonio, not Shylock, who, as the distrustful usurer warns Bassanio, "hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England-and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad." It is Portia whose beauty, wealth, and virtue bring suitors whom "the four winds blow in from every coast," drawn as Jason was to Colchos by the Golden Fleece of her sunny locks. There are critics, seduced perhaps by an economic *zeitgeist,* or perhaps by the semantics of "fleece," who take all this for the merest fortune-hunting, and it is true that Bassamo, touching Antonio for the wherewithal to get to Belmont, explains that by spotting the right casket he will "get clear of all the debts I owe." There is a long tradition which judges all Venice to be ruled by Pecunia, to be the Venice of Volpone, and all Venetians to be out for what they can get, so that the imposition of "Christianity" on the beaten Shylock is nauseating cynicism. It has been argued that by courtship Bassamo repairs his fortunes, that Portia lacks compassion for her baffled suitors, that Antonio has spurned Shylock like a dog, that Lorenzo takes Shylock's ducats along with His daughter, and that Gratiano-hitherto a harmless minor Mercutiogloats venomously over the fallen enemy. Human nature certainly has its blemishes, and Elizabethan laughter is often unsentimental. But the realism of these human imperfections is not the code for unlocking the play's meaning. "Logic," Harley Granville-Barker remarked with the experienced producer's insight, "can turn Bassanio into a heartless adventurer. . . . But the actor will find he simply cannot play Bassanio as a humbug." C. S. Lewis spoke excellently on the point when in his British Academy lecture "Hamlet, the Prince or the poem?" he touched on *The Merchant of Venice,* finding it a good example of the land of play which can be twisted out of recognition by character criticism .. Nothing is easier than to disengage and condemn the mercenary elements In Bassanio's original suit to Portia, to point out that Jessica was a bad daughter, and by dwelling on Shylock's wrongs to turn him into a tragic figure The hero thus becomes a scamp, the heroine's love for him a disaster, the villain a hero, the last act an irrelevance, and the casket story a monstrosity What is not explained is why anyone should enjoy such a depressing and confused pIece of work.

Fortunately, much more generous views of the play have been offered in recent years, not only by Granville-Barker and C. S. Lewis but by Bertrand Evans, John Russell Brown, E. IN. W. Tillyard, and others. Tillyard, in his posthumously-published *Shakespeare's Early Comedies,* asked for "a renewed simplicity of vision, and renewed attention to what the text tells us." If Antonio's mends are, as Quiller-Couch thought, "a circle of wasters, born to consume the fruits of the earth," the play would lack moral form. "A renewed simplicity of vision"

is indeed to be desired in many areas of Shakespeare criticism, and applied to *The Merchant of Venice* it would reveal, from the words of the text, that Shakespeare has done all he can to present a company of friendly, lively youths, speaking unaffectedly of love and honor, "argosies themselves" (as Granville-Barker calls them) "of high-flowing speech," affectionate to one another, and deeply concerned for Antonio in the strange mood that overshadows him, and the mortal danger that impends over him. If Portia's Sunny locks are the Golden Fleece, Bassanio's adventure for her is armed not at her gold but at herself, her charm and beauty. Her wealth is the bounty to her virtues, and all-wealth, charm, beauty, and virtues together-are destined to the right suitor by a father so holy that his device of the caskets must infallibly bring her to bliss. So Shakespeare tunes a Marlovian eloquence to celebrate her world-compelling beauty:

All the world desires her
From the four corners of the world they come
To lass this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint
The Hyrcanian deserts and the vast wilds of wide
Arabia are as thoroughfares now
For princes come to view fair Portia.
The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head
Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar
To stop the foreign spirits, but they come
As o'er a brook to see fair Portia

Portia, the center of the world's homage, and Antonio, the soul of self-sacrificing friendship-these have a providential right to their sway It was a happy decision which prompted John Russell Brown to treat the play under the title of "ove's Wealth": before Shakespeare ever lets us see Shylock he establishes the themes of generosity among friends and of wealth as goodness Antonio's prosperity is as much a fairytale matter as is Portia's; his argosies come and go without his raising a finger or opening a ledger-they are cast away as if by witchcraft, and brought to port again as If by miracle. It is Shylock who works for his ducats, reckoning terms, estimating risks, drawing up bonds, keeping strict conditions, and answering the plea for mercy with "What justice shall I fear, doing no wrong?"

The Jew of Malta and *The Merchant of Venice* are both about the motives of society. Marlowe sees these, apart from some redeeming gleams in minor characters, as the manipulation of power, wealth being Its sinews and intrigue its method. Shakespeare's interpretation is quite different. *The Merchant of Venice* celebrates human goodness, not uncritically, for no unblemished world exists, yet responding movingly to what

goodness can be among men and women. Bassanio and Portia have loved at first sight and have kept their love fresh during absence; Bassanio courts her for the grace of body and spirit she so eminently expresses; Lorenzo adores Jessica for being wise, fair, and true; Bassanio offers his life for his friend's; and Antonio, with grave and tender dignity, will sacrifice His life for Bassanio's happiness.

At three points, however, we are brought up sharply. Antonio admits he has spat on Shylock and is like to do so again: Gratiano gloats over the beaten enemy: and Christianity is imposed on Shylock as a condition for the "mercy" that is shown him At these points we need to recognize how strongly Elizabethan assumptions could prevail in popular taste. There were deep-rooted traditions about the morality of money-lending, deep-rooted antipathies against intriguing aliens (especially murderously intriguing ones, like Shylock), and deeprooted beliefs that Christian baptism was essential for salvation.

Shakespeare's "ideas" are generally conventional, and his sense of economics (if one may term it thus) is not less so than other regions of his thought. One may query how, in any practical way, trade can be camed on without money-lending for profit, but the play is not about practical ways of carrying on trade; It is about generosity and avarice. In Thomas Wilson's *Discourse of Usury* (1572) occur words which might express Shakespeare's own assumptions:

To lend freely is a land of liberality and bountifulness, when a man departed from his own to help his neighbor's want, without any hope of lucre or gain at all, for he is benefited that borroweth and feeleth great comfort in his great need. Whereas lending for gain is a chief branch of covetousness, and makes him, that might before have been accounted bountiful. to be now reckoned a greedy gamer for himself, seeking his own welfare upon good assurance, without any care at all what becometh of his neighbour .. God ordaineth lending for maintenance of amity, and declaration of love, betwixt man and man, whereas now lending is used for private benefit and oppression, and so no charity is used at all.

When generosity itself, as in the play, is within an ace of being the victim of legal murder committed against

the kindest man.
The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies, and one in whom
The ancient Roman honour more appears
Than any that draws breath in Italy

Gratiano's almost hysterical taunts must have provided a safety-valve for an audience ill-disposed both to Jews and to usury. For Thomas Wilson, usury is clearly the road to Hell, and those who practice it are the devil's servants. And Shylock's enforced conversion from both usury and Judaism, would be, for an Elizabethan, a major benefit bestowed on him.

The play is, in fact, finely devised to set "maintenance of amity and declaration of love" above "private benefit and oppression." But the problem is to prevent its being monopolized in our attentions by Shylock. Shylock cannot possibly be played down; in every phrase he reveals a mind governed by the fatal conditioning to which it has been subjected Harry Levin thought that "in rounding off the angles and mitigating the harshness of Marlowe's caricature Shakespeare loses something of its intensity." But surely this is not so. Barabas, hurling his play through its farrago of excitements, remains a series of formulas-Dives, *libertin,* revenger. Shylock is a man in whom cohere, full and unmitigated, tragic and terrible alienations. In *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* Bernard Spivack defined the violences such men undergo, racked by their imIer evil:

They all reflect the suffering that appetite experiences in an environment that resists It Revenge, ambition, lust, are in all of them a fever. . They have, as It were, a career of illness inside the dramatic action that contains their lives, and all their words and deeds are consistent symptoms of its course towards crisis

The finest Shylock I have seen, that of Sir Michael Redgrave, left one in no doubt about the humiliations which have made him what he is, but equally in no doubt about the fanatic and frenetic evil those humiliations have engendered. Fearful and grand as this is, there must be set up against it such a countervailing morality as will make valid the play's fundamental belief that goodness and love are what life is really about. Hazlitt (and others have done likewise) found His sympathies much more with Shylock than with Shylock's opponents. "He is honest ill his vices," Hazlitt observed, "they are hypocrites in their virtues." But thIs would make *The Merchant of Venice* much more like *The Jew of Malta* than it is. We now lack the Christian conditioning which, behind whatever shortfallings the "Christians" reveal, gave a deep valuation to the play's controlling intuitions. Recently-in the criticism for instance of Bertrand Evans and E. M. W. Tillyard-there has been a renewed sense that these values support the drama. Portia's confrontation of Shylock is not, as often supposed, an exercise ill legalistic outwitting. First, the Duke has tried His persuasion; surely, he urges, at the last moment Shylock, "Touched With human gentleness and love," will be merciful. This plea signally failing, Bassanio offers double repayment, to be likewise refused. Finally, Portia tries three lines of appeal.

First, in her speech on the quality of mercy-a speech so familiar that we may overlook the passion with which it relates mercy to the Christian tradition-she pleads with Shylock to show that he shares in the religious nature of man. But for him the nature of man amounts to moral self-sufficiency "My deeds upon my head!" Then she offers ample repayment and again pleads for mercy, only to be met with that "oath in heaven" which signifies what Shylock's idea of "heaven" stands for vengeance on racial and personal enemies. At last she pleads for a surgeon, "for charity"; but that is not in the bond. And only then, when Shylock is merciless both to his victim and to himself, does she enforce the legal trap--quibble though it may be-which allows goodness to triumph over evil.

Aspects of Shylock do indeed move us; aspects of Venice do indeed disturb us. Hatred breeds hatred; so much the play says, and *The Jew of Malta* had said it too, the practice

of the world bearing them both out. But love breeds love; this the play also says, and *The Jew of Malta* had not said it. The values set up against the corrosions of hatred are wonderfully rendered in the poetry, in the grace, tenderness, and eloquence with which it conveys Its themes of love and honor. It does not strain after conceits or intricate logic; its quality is rather a confident and beautiful clarity, tender with humor and sympathy between Antonio and ms friends, courtly and sweet-natured between Bassanio and Portia, measured and poignant in Antonio's peril, and climaxed with lyrical harmony in the moonlit gardens of Belmont:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears, soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold,
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But ill his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim
Such harmony is in Immortal souls,
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it
Come, ho' *[to the Musicians]* and wake Diana
With a hymn,
with sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music

It is through such poetry of grace and goodness that the play achieves a strength positive enough to contain the explosive force of Shylock.

Marlowe offers audacity as life's value. Shakespeare intends no overt message, yet from his fantasy of enchanted princess and dangerous ogre there rises such truth of humanity and such beauty of valuation as, in Shelleyan phrase, "minister to the effect by acting upon the cause," affecting us not as "the deity of prescience" but as that "omnipresent creativeness" by which we realize in our own imaginative and moral natures the humanity Shakespeare so movingly interprets III the play.

Source: Arthur Humphreys, *"The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice* Two Readings of Life," in *The Huntington Library Quarterly.* Vol. 50,No 3, Summer l987, pp 279-92.

Topics for Further Study

Try to image that the Nazis had staged *The Jew of Malta* during World War II. Discuss some of the reasons why they might have done so, and consider how the performance might have been staged.

Compare Marlowe's play with Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice.* In what ways are Shylock and Barabas similar? How are they different?

Consider the historical events in England in the last half of the sixteenth century. In what ways do these events influence Marlowe's play, especially the violence of the action?

Marlowe's primary theme is that of the corruption of man, especially with regard to religion.

Discuss the negative depictions of religion in *The Jew of Malta.*

Marlowe sets up two distinct groupings of people in *The Jew of Malta.* One group consists of the innocent younger generation: Abigail, Mathias, and Lodowick. On the other side, the older and more corrupt generation plots against one another. Ultimately, the innocents are destroyed.

Many modern psychologists argue that the younger generation is constantly motivated to eliminate the older group. But Marlowe's play works in exactly the Opposite manner. Discuss these two groupings and what an understanding of the inter-generational conflict can reveal about the late sixteenth century.

Compare and Contrast

Sixteenth Century: The Anglican Church is initially established in England in 1534, by Henry VII, who establishes Protestantism as the official church. In effect, Henry's decree also outlaws the Roman Catholic Church, and Henry seizes all church property, liquidating it as a source of revenue for his reign. The seizure of church property is supported by many people, who feel that Catholicism is all about performance and ornamentation and that It lacks substance and piety. This emphasis on performance and an assumed lack of piety is evident in Marlowe's depiction of the friars as greedy men who care more about Barabas' money than they do about his soul

Late Twentieth Century: In many ways, the English still view the Catholic Church with suspicion There are still laws that prohibit a member of the monarchy from marrying a Catholic, and the Anglican Church remains the official church of England No Catholic can inherit the throne.

Sixteenth Century: Catholic Mary Stuart, queen of Scots, is beheaded February 8, 1587, by order of her cousin, Elizabeth I (sister of Mary Tudor). Mary Stuart provided an impetus for continued plotting among the Catholics (who wanted to restore England to the Pope) against the Protestants (who saw all Catholics as a threat to their safety). Marlowe's audience would be expecting to see negative depictions of Catholics in his work. These are easily seen in the greed of the Catholic officials in Malta.

Late Twentieth Century: The conflict between Protestants and Catholics continues, accounting for bombings and deaths in both London and Ireland. Each side still views the other as evil and destructive.

Sixteenth Century: This period begins the golden age of theatre in England. Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, and William Shakespeare as well as Marlowe are writing plays. However, Marlowe and Shakespeare dominate the English theatre at the end of the century, leading to a period of great theatrical production in the early seventeenth century by playwrights such as Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Cyril Tourneur, John Webster, and John Ford.

Late Twentieth Century: While many of the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century playwrights continue to have their works produced, only Shakespeare still dominates the stage and film, illustrating that many of the ideas that Marlowe explored, and which Shakespeare so liberally borrowed, have remained compelling and topical.

Sixteenth Century: English explorers, including Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, seek to glorify England through conquests of new lands. They return to England with riches for their queen and establish colonies in the new world that honor England's greatness. Drake is particularly successful as a naval captain, capturing Spanish ships and seizing their riches for his queen. The English are not at war with Spain, but stealing from Catholic Spain is easily celebrated. In Marlowe's play, Malta's governor sees nothing wrong with stealing from the Jews, who have done no wrong.

Twentieth Century: Throughout history, religion has been used to justify many violent acts. Adolf Hitler uses religious intolerance to justify the genocide of European Jews Religious Issues lie at the core of Israeli and Palestinian differences, and the Catholic Irish and the Protestant English still continue a guerilla war begun three hundred years earlier.

What Do I Read Next?

Doctor Faustus (1593) is Marlowe's best known and most frequently performed play. This play focuses on a doctor who sells his soul to the devil in an attempt to learn all the knowledge known to man.

A Dead Man in Deptford (1996), by Anthony Burgess, is a fictionalized account of Marlowe's life that emphasizes the dramatic events, including the accusations of murder and spying that circulated while Marlowe was still alive. Burgess also explores the rumors of assassination and political intrigue that surrounded Marlowe.

The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe (1995), by Charles Nichol, is a fictionalized account of Marlowe's murder. There is little emphasis on Marlowe as a writer, but Nichol does a nice job of recreating the world of Elizabethan spies and conspiracies.

The Merchant of Venice, by William Shakespeare, was first presented in 1596. This play likewise involves betrayal and deceit, but it is interesting in another respect because the ending creates many questions about the definition of comedy. A complete moral resolution is missing, but in the case of this Shakespearean play, the plot raises many complicated questions about prejudice and honesty.

Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" is a parable about greed. As he did elsewhere in his *Canterbury Tales,* written in 1387, Chaucer uses an old man's greed and lust to reveal the vulnerability of men.

The Cambridge Cultural History: Sixteenth Century Britain (1992), edited by Boris Ford, provides an accessible history of sixteenth-century life, including: cultural and social life, architecture, literature, music, art, and Renaissance gardens.

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This text offers a collection of Critical essays on Marlowe's plays.

Cole, Douglas, *Christopher Marlowe and the Renaissance of Tragedy,* Praeger, 1995.

Cole's book examines the major literary traditions of Marlowe's era and how he transformed them into themes fitting his purpose.

Hammill, Graham L , *Sexuality and Form: Carvaggio, Marlowe, and Bacon,* University of Chicago Press. 2000.

This author uses Caravaggio's paintings, Marlowe's plays, and Bacon's scientific treatises to explore the interdisciplinary connections between sexuality and violence.

MacLure, Millar, ed., *Christopher Marlowe.* Routledge, 1995.

This text provides a compilation of critical essays, presenting contemporary responses to the author's work.

Marlowe, Christopher, *The Complete Plays,* edited by J. B. Steane, Penguin, 1972.

This work is a collection of all of Marlowe's play, fully restored by recent scholarship.

Shapiro, James C, *Rival Playwrights. Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare,* Columbia University Press, 1991.

Shapiro examines three of the greatest of the Renaissance playwrights, comparing their work within a historical context. Although Shapiro is occasionally forced into conjecture about his three subjects, much of what he says is grounded in historical fact.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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