
Hypocrites and Anti-Semitism: Representation of Christians and Jews in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

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Abstract

Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* are both similar plays by portraying their Jewish characters as villains towards the Christian heroes. The difference between the playwright's styles come from the way they portray their villainous Jew's identity. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare attempts to humanize Shylock to be accepted by the Venetians citizens that are quick to use him out of necessity, but outcast him once he demands justice for his bond made with the Christian merchant, Antonio. Marlowe's Barabas from *The Jew of Malta* is characterized as a Machiavellian in his pursuit of revenge against the city of Malta. The mixture of being both a Jew and a Machiavellian makes it difficult for the audience or reader to distinguish if Marlowe creates Barabas to be evil because of his Jewishness, practicing the philosophy of Machiavelli, or both, and not being able to separate the identities. Along with the anti-Semitic representation of Judaism in both plays, Marlowe and Shakespeare also represent their Christian characters with severe flaws that portrays the hypocrisies within the Elizabethan church during the playwright's lifetime.

Hypocrites and Anti-Semitism: Representation of Christians and Jews in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

The idea of anti-Semitism is nothing new in literature, and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* are plays that do not escape this notion. Although the views of Judaism by Shakespeare and Marlowe appear to be predominately prejudiced in both plays, both authors also appear to question their trust in the hypocrisies of Christianity as well. While the playwrights differ from each other in some respects, Shakespeare and Marlowe both employ the popular negative Jewish stereotype that they may, or may not have, agreed with to criticize the hypocrisy of Jews, Christians, and orthodoxy as a whole.

Marlowe and Shakespeare were both born in 1564, and it is unlikely either playwright ever met a person of Jewish faith who had been originally from England. King Edward I ordered the expulsion

of English Jews on July 18th, 1290. In Karen Barkey's "States, Regimes, and Decisions: Why Jews were Expelled from Medieval England and France," she dissects the reasons this eviction would happen after years of a positive relationship between the monarch and Jews. Although she argues to the contrary, she cites "the ambitions and world-view of the Church, the advent of Crusading, the rise of militant mendicant orders, the stimulation of local religious enthusiasms, increasing hostility by religious leaders to usury, and Rome's insistence that Jews wear a differentiating badge" (478). While the elites in Christian churches had ambitions, and a common dislike of Judaism, the church itself is to not be blamed for the eviction decision. Barkey argues, with supportive evidence from Richard Chazen's *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages*, that "At no time did the Church, either in England or France, call for Jewish expulsion. Nor did kings simply respond to anti-Jewish mass and elite demands. Happily, the best work in this tradition does not treat the religious factor as an exclusive cause but combines a consideration of these matters with economic and social strands of evidence" (478).

While Barkey argues against the expulsion being solely the church's fault, Robert Winder supports this evidence in *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*. Winder provides different accounts that took place in the early 12th century of negative acts towards the Jewish community in England by the country's citizens, despite previous monarchs offering their protection for Jewish citizens. Eventually, like England's citizens, the monarch turned on the Jews, using them as nothing but a financial resource that they had no intention of repaying. Winder states, "Henry II protected [the Jews] (they were the goose, after all, that laid several golden eggs in the form of castles and cathedrals), but he also, and with impunity, confiscated a quarter of their wealth in 1187" (47). Although the distrust between the monarch and Jews began with Henry II, each monarch afterwards would increase this prejudice towards the Jewish communities. Winder writes, "Resentment of the Jews slowly hardened into official disdain. In the thirteenth century, Henry III not only plundered them, but began to destroy their legal rights. One by one, they were expelled from town after town, including Leicester, Lincoln, Warwick, Southampton, Nottingham, and Newbury" (48). The Jews of England were not just dealing with eviction though. Lynch mobs and other atrocities dealing with murder became too common for those who went against the monarch and his people.

Barkey believes that "Jews were evicted as a result of attempts by kings to manage royal insecurity, refashion relations between state and society, and build more durable systems of taxation

within the territories [England] claims as theirs” (475). Winder quotes A. L. Poole’s claim in *The Oxford English Dictionary* that the Jewish communities brought the expulsion upon themselves. Poole writes, “The ostentation which possession of great wealth enabled the Jews to display, and their unconcealed contempt for the practices of Christianity, made them an object of universal dislike” (Poole 50). No matter which way the expulsion of Jews is viewed, in the end, it is an event that slandered the reputation of Judaism in the eyes of the English.

Until the resettlement of Jews in England during the mid-17th century, Shakespeare’s Jewish merchant, Shylock, in *The Merchant of Venice* and Marlowe’s Jewish merchant, Barabas, in *The Jew of Malta* represent attitudes towards greed and vengeance that could only be based on stereotypes that both playwrights likely knew but had never seen for themselves. While this Jewish prejudice exists in each play, both playwrights also use this judgment to show the hypocrisy of the Christian characters. While this hypocrisy of Christians may have been viewed differently by audiences during the time periods in which the playwrights were active compared to present-day audiences, in Barbara Newman’s “The Burden of Church History in the Middle Ages,” acknowledges that although the church was an important aspect of everyday life, it was severely flawed: “The church is the only human institution that is an article of faith: ‘one, holy, catholic, and apostolic,’ though it may also be divided, schismatic, sinful, corrupt, exclusionist, self-absorbed, and triumphalist” (1010). Hypocritical representation of the church or Christian figures was not a new concept during the Elizabethan period of England. Geoffrey Chaucer, writing in the Middle Ages, features several Christian characters in the prologue of his unfinished work, *The Canterbury Tales*, that portray hypocrisies. The Pardoner excels in fraud by accepting payment in exchange for viewing false religious relics. The Monk refuses to live by the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, a lifestyle dedicated to work and prayer, and instead, indulges himself in eating and hunting. Chaucer did not only use hypocrisies to describe Christians in his work. Although some characters are described to be self-absorbed or sinful, Chaucer also includes multiple characters that represent the positive, beneficial characteristics of Christianity. The Knight, who is a beacon of chivalric code, and the Parson, a poor man rich in holy thoughts and deeds, are examples of characters that practice Christian doctrine.

According to the diary of Phillip Henslowe, a valuable source in following the theatrical activity of Marlowe, scholars generally agree that Marlowe wrote *The Jew of Malta* in the year 1590. Although Russell Fraser and Norman Rabkin insist there is no singular source material that Marlowe used for

this play, they do claim, however, that “the celebrated careers of sixteenth-century Jews, the attack on Malta by the Turks in 1565 [and] Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* continue to assist Marlowe’s invention” (263). Henslowe’s initial entries list a total of thirty-six performances at his theaters. Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* had a successful run, but Marlowe’s brilliant writing alone is not the only reason his play was massively successful. Fraser and Rabkin believe the execution of Queen Elizabeth’s personal physician, Dr. Roderigo Lopez, a Portuguese Jew, on the accusation of scheming to poison her helped Marlowe with advertisement: “Interest was no doubt stimulated by the arrest and execution in 1594 of Queen Elizabeth’s Jewish physician, Dr. Roderigo Lopez, [...] Evidence of continuing interest is provided by a ballad entry of 1594, advertising ‘the murderous life and terrible death of the rich Jew of Malta,’ as also by the refurbishing of the play seven years later” (263). Dr. Lopez’s death was viewed as entertainment according to 16th century historian William Camden, noting the roaring of the crowd’s laughter before Dr. Lopez’s execution as he tried to defend himself one last time. Almost a decade after the execution, a letter was written to King Phillip III of Spain to report that Dr. Lopez was unjustly convicted.

Marlowe’s portrayal of Barabas, according to Fraser and Rabkin, is indebted to the traditional image of the Jew as a Vice or Devil. With Barabas’ characterizations matching with this traditional image, Marlowe is able to contrast Barabas’ actions with that of the Christian’s: “In *The Jew of Malta*, [the Jew] seems desirous of scandalizing his contemporaries, as he can. The wicked Jew performs up to expectation, but he is scarcely contrasted in his wickedness with the Christians. Their perfidy is no less than his. Perhaps their hypocrisy is greater” (263). Along with this predetermined image of a Jew, another important observation to notice in Marlowe’s play is the location. Using this traditional portrayal of a Jew, many would assume that Marlowe agrees with English society at the time and writing anti-Semitic content. Milena Kostic’s *The Faustian Motif in the Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe* disagrees with the assumption that Marlowe was being anti-Semitic, but instead, chose a setting outside of England as a way to expose this type of behavior as a universal problem, not just an English problem. Kostic’s statement also suggests why Shakespeare’s play with Shylock takes place in Venice, Italy, rather than England:

This does not mean that these authors disregarded the anti-Semitism on the part of the English, as some critics suggested; it means that they understood it as a universal problem.

What both Marlowe and Shakespeare wanted to do was by grotesquely reinforcing the

stereotype of the villainous Jew, yet treating him as the product of their culture, to expose the greed, cruelty, and hypocrisy covered up by Christian idealistic rhetoric. (94)

Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* opens with a prologue that is spoken by Machiavel, the ghost of Machiavelli, a popular morality device in Elizabethan drama. Machiavel addresses the crowd with "Admired I am of those that hate me most. / Though some speak openly against my books, / Yet will they read me, and thereby attain / To Peter's chair: and when they cast me off, / Are poisoned by my climbing followers" (Pro.9-13). Machiavelli was "a controversial figure throughout the period, execrated by most Elizabethans as a monster, though snakingly admired by many" (Fraser and Rabkin 263). Even with this criticism, many people read Machiavelli's works, primarily *The Prince*, and while criticized them openly, secretly, people wished to learn from them. People want what they do not have, and in the case of the prologue, Peter's chair is a symbol for the papacy, the highest, and most powerful, position in the Catholic church. The prologue ends with Machiavel saying, "I come not, I, / To read a lecture here in Britain, / But to present the tragedy of a Jew, / Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed, / Which money was not got without my means" (Pro.29-32). These two segments of the prologue come full circle when the first act opens with Barabas' soliloquy boasting about his many ships at sea and counting the stacks of gold on his desk.

The most interesting portion of Barabas' opening comes near the end of his soliloquy. "Who hateth me but for my happiness? / Or who is honored now but for his wealth? / Rather had I a Jew be hated thus, / Than pitied in a Christian poverty: / For I can see no fruits in all their faith, / But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride" (1.1.111-116). Just like Machiavelli is hated for his power, Barabas is hated because of his wealth, which is a symbol of power, but for that same reason, is admired by the very same people who frown upon him for his economic tactics such as usury. Even though Barabas appears to be a powerful figure, at this point of the play, he does not actively seek power but foreshadows events that happen later using Machiavellian rhetoric: "And crowns come either by succession, / Or urged by force; and nothing violent, / Oft have I heard tell, can be permanent. / Give us a peaceful rule, make Christians kings, / That thirst so much for principality. / I have no charge" (1.1.130-135). Kostic states that this Machiavellian rhetoric is not only used by Barabas to obtain his wealth, but also by Ferneze, the Christian Governor of Malta, who would betray his alliances to obtain his position of power once again after losing it to Barabas and the Turks. Kostic argues that "Marlowe uses Machiavel not as a mere stereotype, but to make some valid criticism of the Maltese society

where every alliance has its price, and all men are ready to betray each other in pursue of greater profit” (96).

Marlowe’s use of the Machiavel stereotype is not limited to Barabas and Ferneze’s conflict. Abigail, Barabas’ daughter, becomes a nun at first to assist her father in securing the treasure he has hidden throughout his estate, which turns into a nunnery, “for religion Hides many mischiefs from suspicion” (1.2.282). Abigail has a change of morality once Abigail sees her father for the “Jew-Devil” he is throughout the play:

Then were my thoughts so frail and unconfirmed,
And I was chained to follies of the world;
But now experience purchased with grief,
Has made me see different of things.
My sinful soul, alas, hath paced too long
The fatal labyrinth of misbelief,
Far from the Son that gives eternal life. (3.3.59-65)

In this passage, Abigail truly converts into a nun because of the “follies of the world” being the treachery Abigail sees in her father, causing her to become disenchanted by the religious aspect of Judaism. While Marlowe does include this chance at redemption for Abigail, it only comes to her when she converts to Christianity, betraying the alliance she has with her father, and his religion, in pursuit of salvation, Abigail’s “greater profit.”

In the second scene of Act one, Marlowe switches the perspectives to Ferneze interacting with Calymath, son of the Grand Seignior, about “The ten years’ tribute that remains unpaid” (1.2.7). Unlike Barabas’ opening soliloquy, Ferneze’s parts have less of an impact. While Ferneze holds the power as Governor of Malta, and represents the Christian authority, Calymath, the Turkish infidel, and the representation of Islam, holds the power in the confrontation. In hopes for the Turks to collect the debt that Malta owes, Calymath threatens Ferneze in order to lessen the time Malta is needing to collect from its citizens. “Let’s know their time, perhaps it is not long, / And ‘tis more kingly to obtain by peace / Than to enforce conditions by constraint. What respite (delay) ask you, governors” (1.2.24-27). In Pinar Tasdelen’s “The Ottomans and the Turks within the Context of Medieval and Elizabethan English Poetry,” he states,

[The influences of the Ottoman Empire] in the late fifteenth century and the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire, as the leader and spreader of Islam, began to have a profound impact on three continents and achieved several military victories, which led Western Europeans to fear that it would bring the downfall of Christianity. (253)

Ferneze asks for one more month, and against how the Turks were viewed during Marlowe's time, grants Malta the one-month grace period. This generous decision by the Turks to not destroy Malta, or to punish them in any way, for not paying their debt on time symbolizes that even the ones who were viewed as the destroyers of Christianity can also show signs of Christendom towards others.

Once Calymath leaves in scene two of act one, Ferneze orders the Jews of Malta to appear before him. It is at this moment in the play that the idea of a common good that is fair to all and is preached by Christians is contrasted. Ferneze asks the Jews for their aid, but after Barabas and company state they are not soldiers and would be useless militarily, Ferneze reveals to the Jews that he is not requesting their aid, but is instead ordering them with three pre-written articles of decrees. The first one being "the tribute-money of the / Turks shall be levied amongst the Jews, and each of / them to pay one half of his estate" (1.2.68-70). The second article being "he that denies to pay / shall straight become a Christian" (1.2.74-75). Finally, "he that denies this shall / absolutely lose all he has" (1.2.78-79). From the encounter with the Turks, Ferneze seems to be trustworthy. It is at the moment these articles of decrees are being read aloud that the symbols of Christianity in the play start to recite scripture into supporting their wrongdoings. Humphrey states, "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 for the double dealers they are" (286).

While the Jews that accompany Barabas give in to Ferneze's orders without hesitation, Barabas refuses to pay his half and also refuses to be converted because "Half of my substance is a city's wealth. / Governor, it was not got so easily; / Nor will I part so slightly therewithal" (1.2.87-90). Like the Turks to Malta, Ferneze gives Barabas a final warning to give up half of his belongings. Once Barabas finally agrees to the demands, Ferneze does not offer Barabas forgiveness for lashing out at him, instead, Ferneze attempts to hide behind scripture (John 11: 50) that he twists to justify their unjust demands and claims that stealing from the Jews is the only way to help the "common good." "No, Jew, we take particularly thine / To save the ruin of a multitude: / And better one want for the common good / Than many perish for a private man" (1.2.99-102). The first Knight in the room

follows with his own justification, which takes from the scripture of Matthew 27 : 25, “From little unto more, from more to most: / If your first curse fall heavy on thy head, / And make thee poor and scorned of all the world, ‘Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin” (1.2.109-112).

Barabas sees that the government of Malta is simply using him for his wealth, and attempting to justify their actions of theft, a sin, by being prejudiced against Barabas and the other Jews. In retaliation, Barabas begins to use Ferneze’s tactics against him, by quoting Christian scripture in an attempt to disprove the false justification being made by Malta’s government. Hypocritically though, Barabas reveals that he is prejudiced against Christians, just as the Christians are to him, “Preach me not out of my possessions. / Some Jews are wicked, as all Christians are: / But say the tribe That I descended of / Were all in general cast away for sin, / Shall I be tried by their transgression? / The man that dealeth righteously shall live: / And which of you can charge me otherwise” (1.2.114-120). Barabas’ retaliation against the Christian’s theft of his wealth reveals two more cases of hypocrisy, but this time it extends to both the Jew and the Christians. The hypocrisy of Barabas is that although he clearly disagrees with the prejudice against him, he claims that Jews are less wicked and that, not some, but all Christians are wicked. Barabas goes as far as claiming himself as being born better: “No, Barabas is born to better chance, / And framed of finer mold than common men” (1.2.221-222). The hypocrisy of Ferneze is that although Barabas uses Ferneze’s own tactic of scripture against him, Ferneze dismisses it because of Barabas’ sins of being a usurer and hinting at following the teachings off Machiavelli, “As if we knew not thy profession? / If thou rely upon thy righteousness, / Be patient and thy riches will increase. / Excess of wealth is cause of covetousness: / And covetousness, oh, ‘tis a monstrous sin” (1.2.123-127). Barabas is patient though and gathers enough riches to acquire an Arabian slave named Ithamore with hidden treasure throughout his estate that Abigail collects for him.

With the purchase of Ithamore late in Act two, Marlow introduces interesting dialogue that is spoken by Barabas to Ithamore that capsulate the virtue of a Machiavellian: “And I will teach thee that shall stick by thee: / First be thou void of these affections: / Compassion, love, vain hope, and heartless fear, / Be moved at nothing, see thou pity none, / But to thyself smile when the Christians moan” (2.3.172-175). Ithamore praises Barabas for teaching him about his sinister lifestyle. Earlier in the play, Ferneze and his Christian knights appear dominant over Barabas simply for being Christian or of a higher ethic background, but here, Marlowe reveals Barabas’ true nature and rise in social

ranking using only the characteristics of a Machiavellian, not a Jew. In Stephen Greenblatt's "Marlowe, Marx, and Anti-Semitism," Greenblatt claims that "Barabas' avarice, egotism, duplicity, and murderous cunning do not signal his exclusion from the world of Malta but rather his central place within it" (297). Barabas admits to killing "sick people groaning under walls" (2.3.176) and studying medicine to poison people so he could "enrich the priests with burials" (2.3.186). While working as an engineer for Charles the Fifth, he "slew friends and enemy with my stratagems" (2.3.192). Barabas also reveals to Ithamore his history as a usurer, and how he has destroyed many lives through this profession:

And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
And tricks belonging unto brokery,
I filled the jails with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals,
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hang himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll
How I with interest tormented him. (2.3.194-201)

In Barabas' most vulnerable speech about himself, he does not mention that his good fortune in life comes from his Jewish ethnicity, "But mark how I am blessed for plaguing them" (2.3.202). Marlowe fuses Barabas' identity as a Jew with the philosophy and identity of a Machiavellian. Marlowe, unable to separate Barabas from either identity, uses the stereotypical Jewish and Christian opposition as a focus point in order to bring out the hypocrisy of Ferneze, who uses the methods of a Machiavellian in order to gain control, power, and wealth. Barabas embraces both identities, while Ferneze only accepts the identity of a Christian and believes his good fortune is the divine will of God. Marlowe uses Ferneze to symbolize those who loathed over Machiavelli, but still admired, and practiced, his teachings. This can be seen at the end of act five when Ferneze tells Calymath to "march away, and let due praise given / Neither to fate nor fortune, but to heaven" (5.5.123-124). Ferneze achieves the greatest profit (Kostic 96) at the end of the play. He eliminates Barabas, the only person in the play that bests him, and takes Calymath prisoner to use him as ransom for the Ottoman Empire "till thy father hath made good / The ruins done to Malta and us" (5.5.111-112).

Marlowe uses Barabas' will to work with Ferneze as the *deus ex machina* to have Ferneze, the Christian hero, obtain, once again, the most power at the end of the play. Barabas' blind pursuit for revenge against Malta gives him the opportunity to become governor in Act five after he helps the Turks take over Malta. Barabas has all the power at this point, but fears that his new authority will endanger his life:

I now am Governor of Malta; true---
But Malta hates me, and, in hating me,
My life's in danger, and what boots it thee,
Poor Barabas, to be governor,
Whenas thy life shall be at their command? (5.2.29-33)

Barabas, who realizes he does not want the position of governor, is willing to gamble his power in order to obtain a profit from the city of Malta. This decision is made because "he that liveth in authority, / And neither gets friends, nor fills his bags" (5.2.38-39). The gamble that Barabas makes with Ferneze is that he will eliminate Calymath and his army of Turks in exchange for as much wealth as Ferneze can collect from the city, which totals to be one hundred thousand pounds. This agreement between Barabas and Ferneze mixes together the stereotypical trait of greed with a Jew and the Machiavellian philosophy when Barabas makes his decision:

And thus far roundly goes the business:
Thus loving neither, will I live with both,
Making profit of my policy;
And he from whom my most advantage comes
Shall be my friend.
This is the life we Jews are used to lead:
And reason too, for Christians do the like. (5.2.110-116)

Marlowe reveals Barabas to have two important characterizations in this passage. Barabas admits that he does not want to be governor and makes an unlikely deal to work with a Christian. At first read, this may seem like a gesture of good faith for betraying Malta, but that interpretation is the opposite of what Marlowe created Barabas to be. Barabas devises a plan that will give him the power he wants the most of, the power of money. This shows, again, that Marlowe cannot separate the identity of Barabas' Jewishness with his Machiavellian practices. He is after the greatest, quickest,

profit he can gain. The other characteristic, that eventually leads to his death, is Barabas' willingness to trust Ferneze after those he deems closest betray him. Barabas fears his position as governor will be the death of him due to Malta hating him but boasts about his plan to take down the Turks with Ferneze, who openly remarks against him: "O villain! Heaven will be revenged on thee" (5.2.26). Barabas may think he outwits the people who betray him, but his rash actions are what leads to his overall downfall. Instead of Barabas analyzing his situations, he only reacts according to Greenblatt in Kostic's article: "[Barabas'] actions are always responses to the initiatives of others: not only is the plot in Marlowe's play set in motion by the Governor's expropriation of his wealth, but each of Barabas' particular plots is the reaction to what he perceives as a provocation or a threat" (Greenblatt 112). Barabas may be the Jewish villain in the play who almost achieves his goal, but his Machiavellian lifestyle is bested by the ultimate Machiavellian character, Ferneze.

While both Shakespeare and Marlowe mirror each other in some respects, Arthur Humphreys' "*The Jew of Malta and The Merchant of Venice: Two Readings of Life*," describes their approach to the topic of hypocrisy and anti-Semitism as profoundly different: "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 [the reader] to the intense theme of vengeful outwitting" (279). Barabas and Shylock both seek to triumph over the "Christian" world they are stuck in while seeking revenge against those that wrong them. Unlike Marlowe, whose Jew and Christian actively seek to manipulate one another without sympathy for each other, Shakespeare's play welcomes a variety of human morality in the character's decisions throughout the play, most notably during Portia's famous "quality of mercy" monologue. Shakespeare still has Shylock in defeat at the end of *The Merchant of Venice*, losing everything including his identity as a Jew. The difference, however, is that Shakespeare characterizes Shylock not only as the stereotypical Jew, but as a human being with reasoning behind his actions. Unlike Barabas' murderous ways in Marlowe's play, Shylock attempts to achieve revenge through legal action. For his introduction to *The Merchant of Venice*, David Bevington writes, "Shylock can provide a perspective whereby we can see the hypocrisies of [Christians] who profess a higher ethical code. Shylock's compulsive desire for vengeance according to an Old Testament code of an eye for an eye cannot be justified by the wrongdoings of any particular Christian" (77). Shylock invites sympathy for how he is looked down upon throughout the play, but he is also sinister within his realm of contracts and legalities for a pound of Antonio's flesh. Regardless

how justified Shylock is or is not in his Old Testament thinking, he is still the villain in a love comedy and must fail for the other character's happiness. From a Christian perspective, Shakespeare wrote *A Merchant of Venice* to celebrate the love, honor, and risk-taking between Antonio and his friends. Shylock, the Jew and outsider of Venice, is hindering the happiness of Antonio and his friends, and thus, must be defeated by the Christians.

Shakespeare's choice to use Venetians as examples of exemplary Christians had a purpose, claims James O'Rourke's "Racism and Homophobia in *The Merchant of Venice*." Since the expulsion of Jews in 1290, the foreign usurers that were hated in London were mostly Italian: "A royal edict of 1559 that tightened the currency regulations on 'merchant strangers' warned that 'the Italians above all others to be taken heed of, for they lick the fat even from our beards'" (376). O'Rourke goes on to say that the Italians served as the primary source of foreign capital, but just like the Jews, were subjected to a series of parliamentary petitions that called for their expulsion and xenophobic riots organized by London's working class.

In the opening act of the play, Bassanio approaches Shylock about a loan that Antonio will be bonded with. In response to being invited to dine with Antonio and Bassanio, Shylock says "[...] I / will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, / walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat / with you, drink with you, not pray with you" (1.3.33-35). Shylock openly states his opinion of Christians, and refuses to befriend Antonio and Bassanio because of their religious affiliation and past experiences with each other. Shylock calls Antonio a "good man" (1.3.12) in front of Bassanio, not because he takes a liking to him, but because Shylock knows of Antonio's many ships at sea and the fortune that awaits him when they come back. Apart from Antonio being Christian, Shylock also mentions his hatred towards Antonio's business practice by saying, "But more for that in low simplicity / He lends out money gratis and brings down / The rate of usance here with us in Venice" (1.3.40-42). Although Shylock's comments towards Antonio seem harsh, Shakespeare makes an attempt to justify Shylock's hatred by vilifying, although not as much as Antonio, for his previous actions against Shylock: "You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, / And spit upon my Jewish gabardine, / and all for use of that which is mine own" (1.3.109-111). O'Rourke claims that "Shylock's hatred for Antonio does not originate in his nature as a Jew but is the result of having been continually harassed by Antonio while conducting a business that is legal by the laws of both Venice and London" (377). It is obvious through Shylock and Antonio's battle of wits that this is not the first

time they have had conflict with each other, but the harassment on both ends have become personal, with both men attacking each other on the merit of their religion.

This defensive, vengeful attitude is not a random character trait for Shylock, but instead, is a developed trait by the majority of the characters viewing Shylock as an outsider or alien. This observation of Shylock as an outsider is seen as a benefit to the city of Venice by Antonio, who, when speaking with the Duke, says that strangers are essential to the survival of Venice (3.3.27-31), and Portia, who no matter how justified Shylock can be, invokes a law at the end of the trial scene protecting all citizens against aliens (4.1.346-347). With all the disrespect Shylock takes, Shakespeare presents a chance for the audience to connect with Shylock on an emotional, more human level. In Shylock's most memorable monologue of the play he speaks plain: "I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew / eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, / affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt / with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the / the same winter and summer, as a Christian is" (3.1.54-60). Within this monologue, Shakespeare portrays that it is only natural for Shylock to seek revenge upon Antonio for his wrong doings, as Antonio is bound to pay Shylock back for Bassanio's loan with a pound of flesh. Shylock refuses any money offered to him during the court scene. In the play's perspective though, Shylock is wrong simply because of his religion.

Shylock's Hebrew Law is considered harsh and unforgiving as he searches for vengeance compared to the New Testament and Christian mercy spoken by Portia in her famous "quality of mercy" monologue:

But mercy is above this scepter'd sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings;
It is an attribute of God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. (4.1.191-195)

It is at this moment in the play that Portia offers Shylock a chance to accept some type of Christian value and payment for his bond. After Shylock refuses "double six thousand" (3.2.300) to erase the bond he has with Antonio, asking Shylock for mercy was the last thing Portia could do to save Shylock from his own downfall. With Shylock doubling down on not accepting any type of currency except Antonio's flesh, Portia's speech on New Testament forgiveness turns out to be the

most significant Christian hypocrisy in the play. As Shylock prepares to carve Antonio, Portia explains a loophole in Shylock and Antonio's bond that reads, "This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood; / The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh'" (4.1.304-305). Realizing his mistake, Shylock attempts to accept money instead of the pound of flesh, which Portia replies, "Thyself shalt see the act; / For, as thou urgest justice, be assured / Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st" (4.1.313-315). Shylock, not being able to complete an impossible task, loses his dominance in the courtroom and finds himself at the mercy of Portia and the Duke for being an outsider (a Jew) who has posed a threat to a Venetian citizen.

In Robin Russin's "The Golden Fleece: Women, Money, Religion, and Power in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*," Russin writes about the hypocrisy shown by Portia: "After extolling the virtues of mercy at great lengths and with examples ranging from the personal to the divine, Portia proceeds to utterly devastate Shylock, depriving him of everything he owns, including his very identity as a Jew" (122). Portia's speech on New Testament forgiveness over Old Jewish Law seem nothing more than a façade of Christian mercy as Portia takes away everything Shylock has to his name, including his identity. Although the court decision of Portia, the Duke, and Antonio is harsh on Shylock, at this point in the play, every Christian character receives some type of benefit or accomplishes a goal except Antonio. Bassanio marries Portia and his best friend is saved from Shylock's bond. Lorenzo claims Shylock's daughter, Jessica, and half of Shylock's wealth upon his death. It is not until Antonio's ships arrive at the end of the play does Antonio solve his problem of feeling melancholy.

While Shylock does not endure the fate of death like his Marlowe counter-part, Barabas, Shylock's fate is to not only be the out-casted Jew, but to now be a useless, newly converted, Christian outcast. In Aaron Kitch's "Shylock's Sacred Nation," Kitch claims that no matter how hard Shylock attempts to humanize himself, he is only viewed as a resource: "The trial scene of Act four confirms what Shylock has already acknowledged about his status in Venice, — he is a "stranger cur" (1.3.116), valued in moments of necessity but subject to scorn most of the time" (150). During Barabas' death, he is able to keep his identity of the hated, Jewish stereotype by getting the last insult in: "Damned Christians. Dogs! And Turkish infidels" (5.5.86). With the Duke sparing Shylock's life, "I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it" (4.1.367), the Duke takes away Shylock's last chance at redemption, dying as a Jewish citizen of Venice before he amounts to nothing:

Nay, take my life and all! Pardon not that!
You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house. You take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live. (4.1.372-375)

Shakespeare and Marlowe both include stereotypical aspects of a Jew into Shylock and Barabas but take their intentions in different directions. Both Shakespeare and Marlowe develop their plots on the idea of a Christian who needs help and a Jew helps, one involuntarily while the other is voluntarily, solve the problem. The difference is that Barabas seeks revenge and riches, while Shylock, wanting revenge as well, seeks to establish himself as a Venetian citizen equal to that of a Christian. The steps each Jewish character takes to achieve their goal may resemble the characteristics of the Jew Devil, but Malta would have not fallen to the Turks if Ferneze did not take money on the grounds of theft from Barabas. If Antonio did not go out of his way to outcast Shylock as a Venetian citizen, perhaps instead of pursuing a pound of Antonio's flesh, Shylock would accept payment, with interest, for the bond.

Marlowe ends *The Jew of Malta* with an epilogue spoken at court that reads:

It is our fear (dread Sovereign) we have been
Too tedious; neither can't be less than sin
To wrong your princely patience: if we have
(Thus low dejected), we your pardon crave:
And, if aught here offend your ear or sight,
We only act, and speak, what others write. (Ep.1-6)

With current performances of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's plays, audiences may be able to recognize the anti-Semitic symbolism as offensive content. In the time which the playwrights were writing however, a Jew's downfall was celebrated while revealing hypocrisies in Christian characters was viewed as blasphemy. Marlowe reminds the audience in his epilogue that if they find anything to be offensive, whether it be the racial bias against Jews or the negative actions of Christians, that the actors on stage only portray what the playwright has written, and their ideas have to have some type of origin.

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