To Robert, Mum, Dad and Janet,
with love and gratitude.

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SECTION I

EARLY CRITICISM

CHAPTER ONE

MARLOWE'S CONTEMPORARIES THROUGH THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Baines, Baker, Beard, Chapman, Chetwood, Cibber, Drayton, Greene, Heywood, Jacob, Jonson, Kyd, Langbaine, Nash, Peele, Rudierd, Shakespeare, Vaughan, Warton, & Wood

Until the twentieth century, criticism of The Jew of Malta based on a close reading of the play and substantiated by specific references to, and in depth analysis of the text was nonexistent. This is not to say that no criticism of The Jew of Malta existed before this time, but rather that earlier criticism does not conform to modern day literary endeavours. By modern expectations the criticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may be considered spotty, anecdotal and largely inconsequential, but it is nonetheless significant because it laid the foundation on which later critics were able to build, and it was unquestionably influential in shaping attitudes towards Marlowe with which succeeding generations, including our own, have never ceased to struggle.

Literary criticism of Marlowe in his own time and until the late eighteenth century was limited to general comments concerning

Marlowe's life, death and morality, and a few sweeping generalizations about his poetry and/or his plays. There was no attempt made to offer criticism of the individual plays apart from a few brief comments. In his review of the opinion of Marlowe's contemporaries towards Marlowe's life and works, Robert Adams refers to various comments by Nash, Chapman, Peele and Shakespeare, in which Marlowe is praised;[1] noting that it is remarkable that so much comment on Marlowe's life and works should be favorable. Adams, to emphasize his point that Elizabethan dramatists were not noted for their kindness or generosity towards one another, cites Bakeless, who observes that "contemporaries in the Elizabethan theatre, ... were ever wont to gibe at one another."[2]

However, Marlowe was accused of atheism and regarded as a blasphemer and heretic by some of his other contemporaries, notably Kyd and Baines,[3] and Robert Greene in the preface to Perimedes the Blacksmith (published in 1588), accused Marlowe of "daring God out of heaven with that atheist Tamberlaine"[4] (a reference to what is possibly Marlowe's earliest play, Tamburlaine The Great in two parts.) Robert Adams insists that this comment by Greene was the only major attack on Marlowe during Marlowe's lifetime, the verbal assaults by

[1] Robert Adams, "A Review of Tamburlaine Criticism," Master's thesis, Sir George Williams University, 1974, pp. 1-4.

[2] Ibid., p. 4.

[3] Adams, pp.1-4, and Irving Ribner, "Marlowe and The Critics," Tulane Drama Review, 8, 4 (1964), 211.

[4] Christopher G. Fanta, Marlowe's "Agonists": an Approach to the Ambiguity of His Plays (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 4.

Kyd and Baines coming after his death.[5] As Adams points out, although the government made some attempt to clear Marlowe's name, scandalous rumours persisted:

> In 1587 the government apparently entertained no doubts about Marlowe's loyalty and orthodoxy. Philip Henderson cites the words of the Privy Council to Corpus Christi that Marlowe's M.A. should be awarded: "it was not Her Majesty's pleasure that anyone employed as he had been in matters touching the benefit of his country should be defamed by those ignorant of the affairs he went about." It was a warning against defamation that later critics were not to heed.[6]

The extraordinary persistence of a phrase is noted by C.G. Fanta:

> Ever since Robert Greene charged Marlowe with "daring God out of heaven with that atheist Tamberlaine" one line of criticism has propounded the image of the heretical Marlowe whose heroes undermined the traditional Elizabethan morality with their atheistic, epicurean or Machiavellian heresies.[7]

In William Vaughan's The Golden Grove (London: Simon Stafford, 1600), and Edmund Rudierd's The Thunderbolt of God's Wrath against Hard-Hearted and stiffe-necked sinners (London: W.I., 1618), Marlowe is referred to as a blasphemer and his death in a tavern brawl is considered to be a fitting end to his scandalous life. Irving Ribner observes that Marlowe was "reviled after his death by moralists like Thomas Beard in his Theatre of God's Judgements (1597) and William Vaughan in his Golden Grove (1600) as merely another blasphemous sinner whose murder might fittingly illustrate the visitation of

[5] Adams, p. 3.

[6] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[7] Fanta, p. 4.

God's judgement upon atheists."[8] Fanta supports Ribner's contention:

> In works such as The Theatre of God's Judgements and The Thunderbolt of God's Wrath against Hard-Hearted and stiffe-necked sinners, sixteenth-century moralists interpreted Marlowe's death in a tavern brawl as God's retribution....[9]

Ribner claims that Marlowe received only a small amount of positive criticism from early critics:

> Among the poets, Chapman ... his friend, did praise him and Michael Drayton wrote the only appreciation of any consequence:
> "Marlowe, bathed in the Thespian Springs,
> Had in him those brave translunary things
> That our first poets had: his raptures were
> All air and fire, which made his verses clear:
> For that fine madness still he did retain,
> Which rightly should possess a poet's brain."[10]

Ribner goes on to say that "this praise, and other tributes ..., is not for the plays but for Hero and Leander, on which his reputation among the literate of his day seems entirely to have rested."[11]

Robert Adams takes a more positive view of the criticism noting that,

> Comment by the competent continued to be complimentary throughout the early seventeenth century. Drayton's lines "his [Marlowe's] raptures were/All ayr and fire which made his verse cleere," were echoed by Thomas Heywood's "Marlo, renown'd for his rare art and wit." Ben Jonson not only alluded to Marlowe's "mighty line" in the First Folio, but "appears to have used the phrase habitually in conversation."[12]

[8] Ribner, "Marlowe and the Critics," p. 211.

[9] Fanta, p. 4.

[10] Michael Drayton in Ribner, "Marlowe and the Critics," p. 211.

[11] Ribner, "Marlowe and the Critics," p. 211.

[12] Adams, p. 12.

Marlowe criticism in the latter part of the seventeenth century was exceedingly rare since "Marlowe's plays went the way of all theatre under the Commonwealth."[13] Irving Ribner writes concerning the fate of the works of Christopher Marlowe that,

> While some of the plays, most notably The Jew of Malta and Tamburlaine, continued to be staged until the closing of the theatres in 1642 and again after the Restoration, their author was gradually forgotten ... [and] ... Marlowe is never mentioned by Dryden, the greatest dramatic critic of his time.[14]

Robert Adams states that the only Restoration reference to Marlowe was by Anthony à Wood in 1691 who helped to perpetuate the rumour started by Francis Meres in 1598 that Marlowe was a homosexual.[15] Wood's comments, while they are significant because they aided in keeping alive the interest in Marlowe's character which was to influence critical appraisal of his works for many years, do not constitute the sole reference to Marlowe during this time. Gerard Langbaine also mentioned Marlowe: "His [Marlowe's] Genius inclin'd him wholly to Tragedy, and he has obliged the world with Seven Plays of this kind, of his own Composure,"[16] and even offered a few remarks about The Jew of Malta, which he says was:

> a Tragedy play'd before the King and Queen, in her Majesties Theatre, at Whitehall, and by her Majesties Servants at the Cock-pit, printed 4°.Lord.1633. (after the Author's Decease) and dedicated (by Mr.

[13] Adams, p. 12.

[14] Ribner, "Marlowe and the Critics," pp. 211-12.

[15] Adams, pp. 10 and 13.

[16] Gerard Langbaine, An Account of English Dramatic Poets (1691; rpt. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Univ. of Calif., 1971), p. 342.

Thomas Heywood the Publisher) To his Worthy Friend Mr. Thomas Hammon of Gray's Inn.[17]

Langbaine credits the play's popularity with Elizabethan theatre-goers to the fact that Edward Alleyn acted the part of Barabas:

> This play was in much esteem, in those days the Jew's Part being play'd by Mr. Edward Allan, that Ornament both to Black-friars Stage, and his Profession; to the One on Account of his excellent Action, to the Other of his exemplary Piety in founding Dulwich Hospital in Surrey[18]

(but of course Alleyn starred in all of Marlowe's plays except Edward II), and quotes the lines from the Prologue containing Heywood's references to "the best of Poets" and "the best of Actors" which he says illustrate Heywood's opinion of Marlowe and Alleyn: "What Opinion Mr. Heywood had of the Author and Actor, may be seen by the beginning of his Prologue spoke at the Cock-pit."[19] Langbaine does not offer his own opinion, neither of Heywood's words nor of Marlowe's works.

The tendency to offer fairly noncommital details about the play's production and performance often in conjunction with interesting tid-bits about Marlowe's life and death characterized the criticism of the early eighteenth century. While critics were tending towards a more open-minded view of the reports about Marlowe's life, death and morality, fascination with the subject still outweighed interest in critical appraisal of his works, as the following article by Chetwood (whose only comment about The Jew of Malta is that it is a "Tragie-

[17] Langbaine, pp. 343-44.

[18] Ibid., pp. 343-44.

[19] Ibid., pp. 343-44.

Comedie" and was written in 1603) indicates:

> This Author was both a Poet, and a Player; but, in the Opinion of some Contemporary Writers, a Man of bad Morals. Having an Intrigue with a loose Woman, he came unexpectedly into her Chamber, and caught her in the Embraces of another Gallant. This so much enraged him, that he drew his Dagger, and attempted to Stab him; but, in the Struggle, the Paramour seized Marlow, turned the Point into his Head, and killed him on the Spot in 1592. His Plays are,
>
> I. Edward II, a Tragedie, 1590.
> II. Tamberlaine the Greate, or the Scythian Shepherde, a Tragedie, in two Parts, 1593.
> III. The Jewe of Malta, a Tragi-Comedie, 1603.
> IV. Lust his Dominions, or the Lascivious Queene, a Tragedie, 1604.
> V. The Massacre of Paris, withe the Deathe of the Duke of Guise, a Tragedie. This Play has no Date.
> VI. Dr. Faustus his Tragical Historie, not acted but Printed, 1635.[20]

The title of Jacob's The Poetical Register: or The Lives and Characters of the English dramatick poets[21] reflects the predominant tendency in criticism of this time: concern with the lives and character of the poets rather than with critical analysis of their works. Jacob offers no criticism of the plays in The Poetical Register and his sole reference to The Jew of Malta is that "This play was very much applauded."[22] Cibber's comments also bear witness to this tendency. Cibber summarizes Wood's report of Marlowe's life, death and morality:

> His [Marlowe's] genius inclined him wholly to tragedy.... I shall present his character ... upon the authority of Anthony Wood.... Marloe ...

[20] W.R. Chetwood, The British Theatre (London: R. Baldwin, 1752), p. 8.

[21] G. Jacob, The Poetical Register: or The Lives and Characters of the English dramatick poets (1723; rpt. Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishers Ltd., 1969), I.

[22] Ibid., p. 172.

> thought proper to practice the most epicurean indulgence, and openly professed atheism; he denied God, Our Saviour; He blasphemed the adorable Trinity, and, as it was reported, wrote several discourses against it, affirming Our Saviour to be a deceiver, the Sacred Scriptures to contain nothing but idle stories, and all religion to be a device of policy and priestcraft; but Marloe came to a very untimely end, as some remarked, in consequence of his execrable blasphemies,[23]

adding generously that "For my part, I am willing to suspend my judgment till I meet with some other testimony of his having thus heinously offended against his God...."[24]

Cibber's only comment about The Jew of Malta repeats Langbaine's remarks word for word, the only difference consisting of the spelling of Edward Alleyn's surname: "This play was in much esteem in those days; the Jew's part being performed by Mr. Edward Alleyn."[25]

D.E. Baker's work provides yet another example of this tendency. Baker offers a few biographical details concerning Marlowe, and a detailed summary of Wood's description of his death and morality. Baker gives his opinion of Wood's account and offers his own opinion of Marlowe's character as that of a free-thinker but not necessarily a heretic. He writes:

> We would, however, rather wish to take this character [i.e., Wood's portrait of Marlowe] with some degree of abatement, and, allowing that Mr. Marloe might be inclinable to free-thinking, yet that he could not run to the unhappy lengths he is reported to have done, especially as the time he lived in was a period of bigotry; and that, even in these calmer

[23] Theophilus Cibber, Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, (1753; rpt. Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), I, 85-86.

[24] Ibid., p. 86.

[25] Ibid., p. 87.

> times of controversy, we find a great aptness in persons who differ with regard to the speculative points of religion, either wilfully or from the mistaking of terms, to tax each other with deism, heresy, and even atheism, on even the most trivial tenets, which have the least appearance of being unorthodox.[26]

Baker devotes three-quarters of the length of his article to Marlowe's life and death, and then states "But, to quit his character in a religious view, let us now consider him as a poet,"[27] but the only critical comment he offers is, "in this light he must be allowed to have had great merit. His turn was entirely to tragedy, in which kind of writing he has left the six following testimonials of his abilities,"[28] after which he lists the plays and their dates (he assigns The Rich Jew of Malta to 1633) and mentions Hero and Leander and "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" but offers no further comment on the plays.

Irving Ribner writes that "in the eighteenth century it is not until the appearance of Thomas Warton's History of English Poetry between 1774 and 1781 that anything resembling criticism appears."[29] Robert Adams' claim that "Marlowe goes unnoticed for nearly a hundred years [after Wood's comment in 1691] until Thomas Warton's History of English Poetry (1781)"[30] is not entirely correct, as the works by Cibber and Baker are testimony to the fact that some mention of

[26] D.E. Baker, Biographia Dramatica, or; A Companion to the Playhouse, (1764; rpt. New York: Ams Press Inc., 1966), I, 492.

[27] Ibid., p. 492.

[28] Ibid., p. 492.

[29] Ribner, "Marlowe and the Critics," p. 212.

[30] Adams, p. 13.

Marlowe was made during these years. But it must be agreed that commentary was scarce and that Warton's "faint praise"[31] of the plays as evinced in the following passage from Warton's work was the closest writers had yet come to actual analysis of the plays: "[Marlowe's] tragedies manifest traces of a just dramatic conception, but they abound with tedious and uninteresting scenes, or with such extravagances as proceeded from a want of judgement."[32]

[31] Adams, p.13.

[32] Warton in Adams, p. 13.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Collins, Crawshaw, Delmer, Drake, Edmunds, Gilbert, Golden, Greenlaw, Grinsted, Hawkins, Hazlitt, Houston, Johnson, Lewes, Lewis, Lowell, Mabie, Morley, Neilson, Pace, Pinkerton, Procter, Saintsbury, Semper, Smith, Swinburne, Symonds, Tegg, Thorndike, Ward, Watson, Welsh, Wendell, Whipple

INTRODUCTION

Fascination with Marlowe's life and death continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Robert Adams writes, "confusion as to what was the character of Marlowe the man will continue on into the next two [i.e., the nineteenth and twentieth] centuries and will colour almost all criticism of his plays."[1]

Interest in the plays themselves, however, gradually increased and writers began to offer more detailed—although still very sketchy by modern standards—comment on the plays.

The criticism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is further characterized by the tendency to use the body of Marlowe's works, rather than an individual play, as the subject. As a result most criticism of The Jew of Malta is to be found within these general studies of Marlowe's plays, which frequently consist of comparing the plays one to the other—not often to the advantage of The Jew of

[1] Adams, p. 13.

Malta.

In spite of the fact that commentary on the play is mainly to be found within general studies of Marlowe's works, criticism of The Jew of Malta during this time is sufficiently abundant that five main categories of criticism may be discerned within it. As an examination of these categories will reveal, the body of The Jew of Malta criticism exhibited—even in its earliest days—a marked diversity of opinion.

It should be mentioned at this point that the categories or groups of criticism referred to in this and in all subsequent chapters do not constitute "schools" which imply conscious, similar methodology as well as similar espousal of ideas. These arbitrarily assigned categories provide a focus for ideas about various aspects of the play. The groups are not mutually exclusive as there is considerable overlap. Therefore, a critic who appears in one section will often surface in another as well.

Three categories which suggest themselves in nineteenth and early twentieth century criticism include short (in most cases, only a few lines or paragraphs are devoted to The Jew of Malta) writings which are not based on a close reading of the play, which offer minimum commentary, and which provide no detailed textual analysis of the play. I have divided these critical responses into the following groups: (A) Brief Expostulatory Reference: Positive; (B) Brief Expostulatory Reference: Negative; (C) Brief Reference: Both Positive and Negative; (D) Reference to Marlowe's Dramatic and Poetic Capacities; and (E) Reference to the Common Themes in Four of Marlowe's Plays. In each of the categories will be found writers who go on at

length to praise (and occasionally condemn) Marlowe. But reference to The Jew of Malta or, for that matter, to any of Marlowe's plays is brief and unexpounded.

(A) Brief Expostulatory Reference: Positive

Criticism expressing a positive opinion of the play constitutes the first category. While authors not included in this category also offered a positive or favourable opinion of the play, they offered some detail to support their ideas. The criticism offered by authors mentioned in this category, however, consists of the expression of a positive opinion of the play, supported by few, if any, critical details. Few writers expressed such unqualified approval of the play as the anonymous author of "Production of The Jew of Malta" (1818), who claims that the play is,

> a very curious and interesting work ... [and] possesses claims to no common admiration for itself; for, besides the high poetical talent it exhibits, it may be considered as the first regular and consistent English drama; and the first unassisted and successful attempt to embody that dramatic unity which had been till then totally neglected or overlooked. The dramatic poems which preceded The Jew of Malta could be considered dramas only in so far as they exhibited events rather than relating them [author's emphasis].[2]

The author considers The Jew of Malta Marlowe's best dramatic work. He writes:

> the Jew of Malta is Marlowe's best play. Not that we like it better than the Faustus or Edward II, but it is better as a play. [author's emphasis] ... neither of those plays possesses in so great a degree as the one before us, that rare, and ... most important quality, which we have called dramatic unity—that tending ing of all its parts to engender and sustain the same kind of feeling throughout. In The Jew of Malta the

[2] "Production of The Jew of Malta," Blackwood's Magazine, 3 (May 1818), 209.

> characters are all, without exception, wicked, in the common acceptance of the term. Barabas, the Governor, Ithamore, the Friars, Abigail, to compass their own short-sighted views, all set moral restraint at defiance, and they are all unhappy, and their unhappiness is always brought about by their own guilt.[3]

The author seems to imply, in the above excerpt, that the "same kind of feeling" maintained in the play is one of wickedness and unhappiness and possibly guilt, but—typically of his time—he offers no examples from or explanations of the text to support his claim. Nevertheless, his enthusiasm for the play is evident. In the same general fashion he defends the play against attack:

> We cannot agree ... that this play is without moral purpose; or that Barabas is a mere monster and not a man. We cannot allow that even Ithamore is gratuitously wicked. There is no such thing in nature—least of all human nature, and Marlowe knew this.... it must not be forgotten that he [Ithamore] is a slave; and a slave should no more be expected to keep a compact with the kind from which he is cut off, than a demon or a wild beast [author's emphasis].[4]

Such lengthy discussion of the play is not typical of criticism expressing unqualified approval of the play. For the most part, all citations with specific reference to the play are very brief. Edwin P. Whipple, for example, writes only that "His [Marlowe's] best plays are The Rich Jew of Malta; Edward the Second ...; and The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus,"[5] and adds only a few words to the effect that Dr. Faustus was his greatest achievement.

[3] "Production of The Jew of Malta," p. 209.

[4] Ibid., pp. 209-10.

[5] Edwin P. Whipple, Essays and Reviews (1853; rpt. Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1891), II, 21.

Further examples may be found in The Making of English Literature by W.H. Crawshaw, whose comment is even briefer: "Four great tragedies stand to his credit—and all of them are productions of singular power,"[6] and in William Shakespeare by Barrett Wendell, whose only specific reference to the play is found in the line "Marlowe had produced in Tamburlaine not only a popular play but a great tragic poem; in 1588, he produced another, the Jew of Malta."[7]

The comment of some writers is almost grudging, as this remark from the anonymous article "Christopher Marlowe" (1853) demonstrates: "[the] play is not less remarkable than [his] others ...,"[8] or so vaguely stated as to be almost meaningless due to its ambiguity, as Louis Lewes writes in his book The Women of Shakespeare. Lewes' only comment about The Jew of Malta is that the acts of revenge are "so terrible as to surpass anything ever yet produced in this line of dramatic poetry."[9]

Alfred H. Welsh's only comment about The Jew of Malta in the book entitled Development of English Literature and Language also tends to ambiguity:

> All the ferocities of the middle age are in the Jew of Malta. If there is less bombast than in Tamburlaine, there is even more horror. Barabas, the Jew, robbed by

[6] W.H. Crawshaw, The Making of English Literature (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1907), p. 114.

[7] Barret Wendell, William Shakespeare (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 70.

[8] "Christopher Marlowe," Fraser's Magazine, 47 (Feb. 1853), 232-33.

[9] Louis Lewes, The Women of Shakespeare, trans. Helen Zimmern (London: Hodder Brothers, 1894), p. 45.

> the Christians, has been maddened with hate till he is no longer human.[10]

Welsh offers no discussion of this observation. He does not indicate whether the fact—for he claims it is a fact—that there is less bombast but more horror in the play works to the play's advantage or disadvantage. He does commit himself to one stand, however, in the only other reference he makes to the play. While writing that Dr. Faustus "best reflects the genius and experience of Marlowe"[11] he contends that "[The Jew of Malta is] A true painting, conceived with an intensity and executed with a sweep of imagination unknown before ...,"[12] and it is on the basis of this remark that the criticism falls into the category of positive opinion about the play.

Edward G. Johnson's meagre comment about The Jew of Malta likewise illustrates the terseness of those who tend to offer qualified praise of the play: "The 'Jew of Malta' is a powerful somewhat repulsive drama, in which we detect the old half-superstitious hatred of the Jews that marked the Middle Ages."[13] The word "powerful" praises the play; but the comments about the play evincing "hatred of the Jews" and the phrase "somewhat repulsive" substantially qualify this praise.

E.W. Edmunds' comments provide an example of slightly more detailed, but still qualified, praises of the play. He commends the play

[10] Alfred H. Welsh, Development of English Literature and Language (Chicago: S.C. Greggs & Co., 1882), I, 314.

[11] Ibid., p. 315.

[12] Ibid., p. 314.

[13] Edward G. Johnson, "Christopher Marlowe," The Dial, 8 (Sept. 1887), 99.

in the words,

> The verse is richer and more natural than any that Marlowe had yet written; in the opening scene especially it develops an energy which, united with a dignity not found in Tamburlaine, at once attracts us to the genuine character of the hero,[14]

but adds:

> But even if this is true and Barabas is a self-consistent character, it is also true that the play does not please us. We do not return to it, as we return to Faustus, for pure poetic delight, for the splendid interpretation of a soul's struggles with itself.[15]

Adolphus William Ward also has certain reservations about the "extraordinary accumulation of villainies"[16] in the play and its complicated plot and he claims that Edward II is Marlowe's greatest drama; but he is nonetheless enthusiastic in his praise of The Jew of Malta's merits. He writes that "As a dramatic composition, the third of Marlowe's tragedies shows a considerable advance upon its predecessors,"[17] and continues that:

> Whatever may be thought of the extraordinary accumulation of villainies perpetrated by the hero, the construction of the plot is extremely ingenious, and, notwithstanding its elaborateness, singularly clear and intelligible. Though the action rises from startling to more startling effects, a climax is reserved to the last. And in form, the play deserves

[14] E.W. Edmunds, The Story of English Literature, 2nd ed. (1907; rpt. London: John Murray, 1911), I, 177-78.

[15] Ibid., p. 180.

[16] Adolphus William Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature, Vol. I (1875), quoted in C.W. Moulton, Library of Literary Criticism, abridged, rev., and with additions by Martin Tucker (1901-04; rpt. 8 vols. in 4, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), I, 133.

[17] Ibid., p. 338.

> high praise; for the vigour and ease of its versification are alike remarkable.[18]

John Churton Collins' comment on the play attests to its importance in formulating "English romantic tragedy":

> In his Dr. Faustus and in his Jew of Malta it would not be too much to say that he formulated English romantic tragedy. He cast in clay what Shakespeare recast in marble.... It is more than probable that without the tragedies of Marlowe we should never have had, in the form at least in which they now stand, the tragedies of Shakespeare.[19]

but once again the praise is not unqualified, (even though the qualifying clause refers to Marlowe's general dramatic aptitude, rather than The Jew of Malta in particular) as he writes that "the temper of his [Marlowe's] genius was such as to absolutely disqualify him from excelling as a dramatist."[20]

(B) Brief Expostulatory References, Negative

Contrasting the brief expostulatory but unelaborated praise is a cache of harsh and largely undocumented condemnation of the play. Throughout there is, however, grudging acknowledgement of the play's appeal and of a certain incipient notion which foreshadows greater things to come.

William Tegg, for example, calls The Jew of Malta Marlowe's "worst play" in his two page discussion of the dramatist: "The late Edmund Kean made an unfortunate choice of his [Marlowe's] worst play—'The Jew of Malta'—for production, but it was only played a few

[18] Ward in Moulton, p. 133.

[19] John Churton Collins, Essays and Studies (London: Macmillan & Co., 1895), p. 150.

[20] Ibid., pp. 155-56.

nights."[21] Tegg offers no further discussion of the play.

F.W. Hawkins in his book entitled Life of Edmund Kean also relegates the play to the low position on the totem pole of Marlowe's plays. He writes that,

> The Jew of Malta exhibits more of his [Marlowe's] defects than any of the other six plays ...; it is powerless to enchain that absorbed and riveted interest with which we contemplate his Faust ...; or move us to that pity and terror which redeem his Edward II from the disgust provoked by his irresolution and effeminacy,[22]

while G.B. Smith asserts that "Marlowe's play The Jew of Malta is worth little except for the strong individuality with which his Jew is put upon the canvas."[23]

J.R. Lowell faults all the plays, excluding Edward II, for lacking "organic unity." He writes that "His plays, with the single exception of Edward II have no organic unity.... Passages in them stir us deeply and thrill us to the marrow, but each play as a whole is ineffectual."[24]

The anonymous author of an 1823 article entitled "English Tragedy" applauds Marlowe's ability as a "tragic writer" in the words:

> Marlowe was undoubtedly the greatest tragic writer that preceded Shakespeare. The spirit of extravagance seems to have dwelt in his brain, and to have

[21] William Tegg, Shakespeare and His Contemporaries (London: William Tegg and Co., 1879), p. 92.

[22] Frederick William Hawkins, The Life of Edmund Kean (London: Tinsley Bros., 1869), II, 40.

[23] G. B. S[mith], "Christopher Marlowe," Cornhill Magazine, 30 (Sept. 1874), 344.

[24] J.R. Lowell, The Old English Dramatists (1892; rpt. New York: Ams Press Inc., 1966), p. 210.

[led] him on to the most extraordinary feats,[25]

but about The Jew of Malta he writes only that "The Jew of Malta we cannot admire, though there is in it certainly the first hint of Shylock."[26] Nathan Drake, while admitting that Marlowe "of all the dramatic poets who preceded Shakespeare [was] certainly the one who possessed the most genius,"[27] qualifies his praise of Marlowe by accusing him of "want of taste" which, he says, "has condemned him as a writer for the stage, to an obscurity from which he is not likely to emerge."[28] Drake contends that The Jew of Malta was written to "stimulate the hatred of the people against this persecuted race [i.e., the Jews],"[29] and his sketchy comparison between Barabas and Shylock also reveals his denigrating and disapproving attitude towards the play:

> The distance ... between [Barabas and Shylock] ... as well with regard to truth of delineation as to poetical vigour of conception, is infinite; for whilst the Jew of Marlowe can be considered in no other light than as the mere incarnation of a fiend, that of Shakespeare possesses ... a touch of humanity [which] ... renders him ... a very possible being.[30]

William Hazlitt is unrelenting and determined in his condemnation of the play:

> The author seems to have relied on the horror inspired by the subject, and the national disgust excited against the principal character, to rouse

[25] "English Tragedy", Edinburgh Review, 38 (Feb. 1823), 187.

[26] Ibid., p. 188.

[27] Nathan Drake, Shakespeare and His Times (1817; rpt. 2 vols. in 1, New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), II, 462.

[28] Ibid., p. 462.

[29] Ibid., p. 463.

[30] Ibid., p. 463.

> the feelings of the audience: for the rest it is a tissue of gratuitous, unprovoked and incredible atrocities, which are committed, one upon the back of the other, by the parties concerned, without motive, passion or object.[31]

(C) Brief Reference: Both Positive and Negative

Criticism expressing a positive opinion of the first two acts and a negative opinion of the last three constitutes a third category. As this criticism leads to speculation as to the authorship of The Jew of Malta, an examination of the criticism is offered in Chapter Five: "The Authorship Controversy." The category is, however, retained in this chapter in order to preserve a sense of what was transpiring in the nineteenth century.

(D) Reference to Marlowe's Dramatic and Poetic Capacities

The body of criticism which constitutes this category and the last one I have identified ("Reference to the Common Themes in Four of Marlowe's Plays"), while still sketchy in comparison to later twentieth century criticism, provides lengthier, more detailed commentary than that offered in the three previous categories. Almost without exception,[32] the criticism belonging to the last two categories is produced by writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The first of these categories includes criticism primarily concerned with the dramatic or poetic quality of Marlowe's work. As in

[31] William Hazlitt, Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, Lecture II (1820), rpt. in Moulton, p. 133.

[32] Exceptions include: the anonymous author of "The Famous Historical Tragedy of 'The Rich Jew of Malta,'" Monthly Revue, 2nd Ser., 67 (April 1812); and Bryan Waller Procter, author of The Life of Edmund Kean (London: Edward Moxon, 1835), Vol. II.

most criticism of this period, [33] comment about The Jew of Malta alone (i.e., apart from the rest of Marlowe's work) is virtually nonexistent. In this particular group of criticism, comment concerning Marlowe's general dramatic and poetic capabilities and achievements is more numerous than reference to these qualities in The Jew of Malta specifically. However, as the authors of the criticism give no indication that The Jew of Malta is to be excluded from the opinions offered, these opinions may be considered to apply to it as well.

The criticism in this category is particularly interesting because it reveals that there exists, among the almost incredible diversity of opinion about Marlowe's life and works, at least one opinion almost universally agreed upon: that is, that Marlowe contributed significantly to the development of English poetry and English drama. R. V. Gilbert, for instance, points out that "Marlowe was the first poet to use blank verse with ease."[34] He writes that "Marlowe took blank verse and with the skill of a master moulded it into the mighty line that was to immortalize him,"[35] and asserts "That Marlowe might have eclipsed Shakespeare, had he lived, is universally admitted; and his tragic death has been much lamented."[36]

William Watson says that Marlowe's claim to the title of "father of English Poetry" is greater than Chaucer's. He writes that Marlowe is

[33] See above, pp. 11-12.

[34] R.V. Gilbert, English Writers (Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Co., 1913), p. 38.

[35] Ibid., p. 39.

[36] Ibid., p. 40.

> the real founder, though not precisely the initiator, both of English tragedy and of English blank verse [and] ... thus ... the father of our poetry more truly than even Chaucer, for Chaucer's direct influence upon Shakespeare and Milton is not great, while Marlowe's unquestionably is—the importance of his position can scarcely be overstated.

William Echard Golden asserts that,

> [Marlowe's] poetry is merely the intervening step between crudeness and perfection. Marlowe is the pioneer that clears the way for great successors,[38]

and he praises Marlowe's pioneering work in the words:

> To inspire [blank] verse with melody and meaning and to unite it with the previously hostile element, the Romantic drama, in a manner at once elevating and successful, was the effort of a great genius ... from chaos he brought forth a drama,[39]

concluding that:

> Marlowe was one of the few men who undertook to reform and elevate the stage, and who succeeded. His services are two-fold, i.e., the introduction of a living blank verse and the recognition and uniting of proper dramatic materials.... he is to be rated as one of the most original, creative poets of the world.[40]

T. P. Grinsted, who also provides no reference specifically to The Jew of Malta, emphasizes Marlowe's dramatic genius. He writes:

> The plots of his pieces [plays] assumed a more regular character than those previously arranged, and he was only eclipsed by his great successor [i.e., Shakespeare].... No greater writer preceded him, whilst his fiery imagination and strokes of passion

[37] William Watson, Excursions in Criticism (London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane, 1893), p. 5.

[38] William Echard Golden, A Brief History of the English Drama (New York: Welch, Fracken Co., 1890), p. 71.

[39] Ibid., p. 70.

[40] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

> communicated a peculiar impulse to those who followed him,[41]

while W.H. Crawshaw claims that Marlowe's "chief gift is a poetic rather than a dramatic one,"[42] emphasizing that his pioneering contribution to drama was an improved poetic expression: "We need to remember ... that he was a pioneer, and that later playwrights learned much from him. He first taught them ... the use of the 'mighty line'...."[43]

F.S. Delmer, who does make a brief reference specifically to The Jew of Malta (i.e.: "in The Jew of Malta [he depicts] the gigantic passion for wealth"[44]), also emphasizes Marlowe's importance to the development of English drama and poetry:

> Marlowe discovered the secret of making blank verse dramatic ... his greatest merit is that he was the first to show the splendid powers that lay dormant in blank verse.... who knows whether Shakespeare would ever have aimed so high had he not had Marlowe as his first model.[45]

H. Morley also provides a very brief note about The Jew of Malta: "Marlowe's Jew of Malta gives in Barabas a powerful picture of the Jew maligned still by the mediaeval prejudices of the Christians,"[46] and lauds Marlowe's general contribution thus:

> Marlowe ... developed blank-verse as the measure for English dramatic poetry, made its worth felt,

[41] T. P. Grinsted, Last Home of Departed Genius (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1867), pp. 215-16.

[42] Crawshaw, p. 116.

[43] Ibid., p. 116.

[44] F. S. Delmer, English Literature from "Beowulf" to B. Shaw (London: Heath Cranton and Ouseley Ltd., 1913), p. 58.

[45] Ibid., pp. 57-58.

[46] H. Morley, A Manual of English Literature (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1880), p. 271.

> and was among dramatists the first cause of its general adoption.[47]

As the above examples suggest, while there is little dissent among writers that Marlowe's work was important in the development of drama and poetry, there is disagreement as to whether he was a great poet or a great dramatist. This disagreement is evident in a large portion of the commentary pertaining to the poetic and dramatic qualities of The Jew of Malta and Marlowe's other plays.

In some of this criticism, although comment about The Jew of Malta is offered, concern for the play as an individual work is minimal. When mentioned, the play is used to illustrate claims about the general quality of Marlowe's poetry and no real interest is taken in the play for its own sake. For example, Alfred H. Welsh in 1882 lauds Marlowe's perfection of blank verse, in glowing almost wistful terms:

> He created a new metre by the melody, variety and force which he infused into the iambic; not a fixed, unalterable type, in which the verse moves to the common and despotic beat of time, but a Proteus, whose varying pauses, speed, and grouping of syllables makes one measure represent a thousand. It flows impetuous and many-colored, like the spirit which feels it—not studies it—and revels in the stream of images,[48]

offering one passage from The Jew of Malta as an example, but providing no analysis of the passage. The passage he quotes in its entirety is the one from I.i.25-32,[49] beginning with "Bags of fiery opals"

[47] Morley, p. 270.

[48] Welsh, p. 319.

[49] J.B. Steane, ed., Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969), p. 349. All subsequent references will be to this edition.

and ending "To ransome great kings from captivity," but Welsh's only elucidation of the passage is to point out the lines' "Variable modulations ...—in particular, the daring but successful license of the first and third."[50] Such strongly implied but unelaborated approval of the poetry suggests that the writer is captivated by passages, and is simply considering The Jew of Malta as part of the author's canon or a segment of English dramatic history, rather than an individual work.

The anonymous author of an 1867 article in Cornhill Magazine quotes the same passage to substantiate his claim that Marlowe created and perfected blank verse; and, like Welsh, he offers no other discussion of the passage, assuming that the passage's merits are self-evident. In the following excerpt, the anonymous writer's comments about Marlowe's verse are so similar to Welsh's that I would hazard a guess that, if the anonymous writer were not Welsh himself, then Welsh must have had this article open before him when he wrote his 1882 comments. He notes:

> like all great poets, he [Marlowe] left his own peculiar imprint on it and ... his metre is marked by an almost extravagant exuberance, impetuosity, and height of colouring. It seems to flow from him with the rapidity of improvisation, and to follow a law of melody rather felt than studied by its author. We feel that the author loved to give the rein to his ungovernable fancy, forgetting the thought with which he started, revelling in sonorous words and pouring forth a stream of images, so that the mind receives at last a vague and various impression of sublimity.[51]

Many of these articles contain assertions that Marlowe was indeed a great poet although not a great dramatist. Mention of The Jew

[50] Welsh, p. 319.

[51] "Blank Verse," Cornhill Magazine, 15 (May 1867), 623-24.

of Malta remains minimal, but is at least present. George Saintsbury, for example, claims that Marlowe would never have been as fine a dramatist as Shakespeare because

> Marlowe was totally destitute of humour ... [and therefore] he was absolutely destitute of the first requisite of self-criticism....he would probably have degenerated from bombast shot through with genius to bombast pure and simple.[52]

Saintsbury notes that Marlowe's "great title to fame is the discovery of the secret of that 'mighty line.'"[53] While he writes of The Jew of Malta that,

> The tragic imagination in its wildest flights has never summoned up images of pity and terror more imposing, more moving, than those excited by The Jew of Malta,[54]

he concludes that,

> It is impossible to call Marlowe a great dramatist ... Marlowe was one of the greatest poets of the world whose work was cast by accident and caprice into an imperfect mould of drama....[55]

Collins' words place him in that group which is convinced that Marlowe's work was significant in the development of English drama and poetry:

> To no single man does our drama owe more than to this ill-starred genius. It was he who determined the form which tragedy and history were permanently to assume ... who first clothed both in that noble and splendid garb which was ever afterwards to distinguish them ... who gave the death-blow to the

[52] George Saintsbury, A History of Elizabethan Literature (1891; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1970), p. 78.

[53] Ibid., p. 78.

[54] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[55] Ibid., p. 78.

> rhymed plays on the one hand, and to the frigid and cumbersome unrhymed classical plays on the other,[56]

but he says that Marlowe fails as a dramatist primarily because of his weakness in characterization: "In ... one play only, ... Marlowe displayed a power of characterization eminently dramatic ... [that is, in] Edward II."[57] He concludes that,

> In a dramatic poet of the first order we look for qualities which are as conspicuously absent in Marlowe's last and maturest play [Edward II] as they are in the plays which preceded it.... But as a poet he seems to deserve all the praise which his admirers give him.[58]

Except for his mention of characterization, Collins provides no details as to what constitutes these "qualities in a dramatic poet of the first order ... which are ... conspicuously absent" in Marlowe's plays.

Hamilton Wright Mabie concurs in the opinion that Marlowe figured importantly in the development of the drama but asserts that his main contribution to the drama was great poetry: "The genius of Marlowe had brought to [the drama's] development the richness of action and the imaginative splendour of great poetry."[59] He argues that although Marlowe did help to change the drama[60] by his contribution of great poetry, he capitalized upon, rather than changed, its penchant for

[56] Collins, pp. 149-50.

[57] Ibid., pp. 158-59.

[58] Ibid., p. 160.

[59] Hamilton Wright Mabie, William Shakespeare: Poet, Dramatist and Man (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1900), p. 136.

[60] See Mabie, p. 146.

"bloody scenes and ranting declamation":

> This taste for horrors and this exaggeration of speech were glorified by Marlowe's genius but remained essentially unchanged by him; it was left for Shakespeare's serene and balanced spirit, deeper insight and larger art to discard the repulsive elements of the tragedy without sacrificing its power.[61]

As an example of Marlowe's perpetuation of the popular type of Elizabethan theatre and Shakespeare's humanizing efforts, Mabie refers to The Jew of Malta and The Merchant of Venice:

> Marlowe's Jew is a monster; Shakespeare's Jew is a man misshapen by the hands of those who feed his avarice.
> .....
> There is a suggestion of the Jew of Malta in Shylock, but [Shylock] bears on every feature the stamp of Shakespeare's humanizing spirit.[62]

Lowell does not consider Marlowe's plays successful, but he does appreciate the ability of some passages to "stir us deeply and thrill us to the marrow"[63] and he quotes Barabas' speech in I.i.19-37, beginning "Give me the merchants ..." and ending with "Infinite riches in a little room" to illustrate what Lowell terms "that luxury of description into which Marlowe is always glad to escape from the business in hand."[64] Lowell also says that The Jew of Malta "comes nearer to having a connected plot, in which one event draws on another, than any other of his plays,"[65] but he considers Marlowe's poetry more

[61] Mabie, p. 147.

[62] Ibid., p. 252.

[63] See above, p. 19.

[64] Lowell, pp. 211-12.

[65] Ibid., p. 219.

valuable than his drama.

Algernon Charles Swinburne's approval of Marlowe's poetry is evident in his words:

> he [Marlowe] alone was the true Apollo of our own dawn, the bright and morning star of the full mid-summer day of English poetry at its highest.... Of English blank verse, one of the few highest forms of verbal harmony or poetic expression, the genius of Marlowe was the absolute and divine creator. By mere dint of original and godlike instinct he discovered and called it into life; and at his untimely and unhappy death, ... he left the marvellous instrument of his invention so nearly perfect that Shakespeare first and afterwards Milton came to learn of him before they could vary or improve on it.[66]

Swinburne particularly admires the passion which he says Marlowe's poetry expresses brilliantly, and he mentions Barabas in his praise of this aspect of Marlovian verse. He writes:

> Sorrow and triumph and rapture and despair find in his poetry their most single and intense expression, extreme but not excessive; the pleasures and pains of each passion are clothed with the splendour and harmony of pure conceptions fitted with perfect words. There is the same simple and naked power of abstract outline in every stroke of every study which remains to us from his hand; ... in the strenuous greed and fantastic hate of Barabas ... we trace the same ideal quality of passion.[67]

However, Swinburne's approval of the play apparently does not extend beyond the poetry, as his only reference to The Jew of Malta in his work entitled A Study of Shakespeare (1880) consists of an abrupt dismissal of Barabas as "a mere mouthpiece for the utterance of poe-

[66] Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Christopher Marlowe," The Works of George Chapman, ed. R.H. Shepherd (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875), II, lxiv.

[67] Ibid., p. lxv.

try as magnificent as any but the best of Shakespeare's."[68]

Like Nathan Drake,[69] Percy E. Pinkerton believes that Marlowe's purpose in writing The Jew of Malta was to capitalize on Elizabethan prejudicial attitudes towards Jews: "Marlowe probably wished to make this a one-character play, and only tried to stimulate the public hatred of greedy Jews,"[70] and his words reveal that he too believes the saving grace of the play is the poetry:

> Barabas fills the whole canvas; the scenes seem to be strung together without art in the sole aim to render him more and more hideous. But, as in every play, mighty lines, brave and beautiful phrases are strewn broadcast about the pages; and from these we must get our pleasure and ignore defects.[71]

Barrett Wendell points out the general dramatic weaknesses of Marlowe's "four blank-verse tragedies"[72] (i.e., Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta and Edward II):

> the plots are not very carefully composed, the characters—though broadly conceived—are not minutely individualized, and the general atmosphere is one of infinite grandeur.... there are many passages full of noble, surging imagination; and many more which seem inferior,[73]

but he admires the "total effect" of the plays, in spite of the faults: "Yet the total effect of any of these tragedies, still more the total

[68] Algernon Charles Swinburne, A Study of Shakespeare, 2nd ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1880), p. 151.

[69] See above, p. 20.

[70] Percy E. Pinkerton, ed., The Dramatic Works of Christopher Marlowe (New York: T. Whittaker, 1889), p. xxi.

[71] Ibid., p. xxi.

[72] Wendell, p. 99.

[73] Ibid., p. 99.

effect of all four, is among the most impressive in English literature,"[74] and refers briefly to The Jew of Malta as a "great tragic poem."[75]

Some critics, while conceding Marlowe's dramatic and/or poetic talents, consider the play a very poor example of these talents. The anonymous author of an article published in Monthly Revue (1812), for example, expresses puzzlement as to the reason for the republication of The Jew of Malta:

> The reason for republishing "The Rich Jew of Malta" does not seem very obvious. It is one of the most extravagant of the old plays in plot and conduct: though as to conduct, indeed, there is none in it, — for events of the utmost consequence, which would have required months at least to prepare, follow one another even without the division of acts. "Time and Space"... are here dragged neck and heels into the service of the stage.... The murders ... are numerous beyond example.... Very few passages of poetical vigour, or powerful originality of thought, compensate for the grotesque absurdities of this sanguinary composition.[76]

Although G.B. Smith praises Marlowe for having "speedily showed [blank verse] to be capable of a perfection which had never yet been dreamed of,"[77] he does not believe The Jew of Malta lives up to this greatness, noting that "Marlowe's play [The Jew of Malta] is worth little except for the strong individuality with which his Jew is put upon the canvas,"[78] and, he says, "we think that the dramatist

[74] Wendell, p. 99.

[75] Ibid., p. 70.

[76] "The Famous Historical Tragedy of 'The Rich Jew of Malta,'" Monthly Revue, 2nd Ser., 67 (April 1812), 434-35.

[77] Smith, p. 329.

[78] Ibid., p. 344.

has failed."[79]

B.W. Procter also believes The Jew of Malta is not one of Marlowe's better plays. He notes:

> There are certainly a few of the old dramatist's "mighty lines" in it; but it is as certainly defective in interest, improbable in its plot, and is stuffed with blood and all sorts of atrocities to such a degree as to amount to burlesque.[80]

(E) Reference to the Common Themes in Four of Marlowe's Plays

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, another category of early Jew of Malta criticism became apparent. The practice of comparing Marlowe's plays one to the other, combined with an increasing tendency to read the texts closely, led to the discovery that certain basic themes were common to all the plays. Criticism became characterized by study of the shared themes, and the plays were interpreted on the basis of the discoveries made. While the detailed analysis common to most competent criticism today does not yet appear, the criticism is more substantial than that of earlier works and reveals a steady progression towards that thorough analysis.

The works in this category are important not only because they illustrate the progressive tendency towards a closer reading and more complete analysis of the text, but also because the ideas they suggested were sufficiently fascinating and provocative to initiate a flurry of critical response and renewed interest in the Marlowe canon. Many ideas expressed during these early years remain under consideration today.

[79] Smith, p. 345.

[80] Bryan Waller Procter, The Life of Edmund Kean (London: Edward Moxon, 1835), II, 176-77.

One of the first writers to attempt longer and more detailed criticism was John Addington Symonds. He was also one of the first to identify a common theme, which he describes as "the love or lust of unattainable things"[81] in Marlowe's plays:

> the leading motive which pervades his poetry may be defined as L'Amour de l'Impossible—the love or lust of unattainable things; beyond the reach of physical force, of sensual faculty, of mastering will; but not beyond the scope of man's inordinate desire, man's infinite capacity for happiness, man's ever-craving thirst for beauty, power and knowledge.[82]

Symonds provides further explanation by describing this "leading motive" as:

> Desire for the impossible—impossible not because it transcends human appetite or capacity, but because it exhausts human faculties in the infinite pursuit—.... Marlowe's lust for the impossible, the lust he has injected ... into all his eminent dramatic personalities, is a desire for joys conceived by the imagination, floating within the boundaries of will and sense at some fixed moment, but transcending these firm limitations, luring the spirit onward, exhausting the corporeal faculties, engaging the soul itself in a strife with God.[83]

Symonds also asserts that there is "a carnal element in the desire itself, a sensuality," which

> sometimes soars aloft in aspirations,... [and, with reference to Barabas,] sometimes ... sinks to avarice, solitary gluttonous delight in gems. It resolves itself again into the thirst for power when we find that the jewels of Barabas are hugged and gloated over for their potency of buying states, corrupting kingdoms....[84]

[81] John Addington Symonds, Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama (London: Smith, Elden & Co., 1884), p. 486.

[82] Ibid., p. 486.

[83] Ibid., p. 486.

[84] Ibid., pp. 486-87.

Symonds believes that Tamburlaine's longing for power and Faustus' for knowledge are somewhat more noble than Barabas' longing for material wealth, but, he says:

> the avarice of the Jew of Malta is so colossal, so tempered with a sensuous love of rarity and beauty in the priceless gems he hoards, so delirious in its raptures, so subservient to ungovernable hatred and vindictive exercise of power conferred by wealth upon its owner, that we dare not call even this baser exhibition of the Impossible Amour ignoble.[85]

It is unfortunate that Symonds does not substantiate his comments by reference to specific passages in the text, but his observations do present a compelling argument nonetheless.

The idea that longing or yearning for the unattainable is a common theme in the plays, became a popular topic for criticism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his book William Shakespeare, Barrett Wendell agrees that longing for the unattainable is a common theme of the plays, but he perceives an even greater significance in Marlowe's use of it as a common theme. He believes that,

> Marlowe, as an artist, was passionately sensitive to the eternal tragedy which lies in the conflict between human aspiration and the inexorable limit of human achievement,[86]

and that Marlowe does express "one profound sense of truth"[87] in his plays, i.e., "We would be other than we are and other than we are we may not be."[88] Wendell notes:

[85] Symonds, p. 493.

[86] Wendell, pp. 99-100.

[87] Ibid., p. 100.

[88] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

> In Tamburlaine this passionate sense of truth is expressed in terms of material struggle; in Faustus the struggle is spiritual; in the Jew of Malta it is racial; in Edward II it is personal. Whether the struggle be with the limits of the conquerable earth, however; or with those of human knowledge, or with those of ancestral inheritance, or with our own warring selves, the struggle is forever the same. We would be other than we are; other than we are we may not be. In all four of Marlowe's tragedies that great, true note vibrates.[89]

Edwin Greenlaw, too, perceives longing or yearning as a theme common to at least three of the plays, as he refers to Tamburlaine as "a study of the thirst for universal political dominion," to Doctor Faustus as "a study of the thirst for intellectual greatness," and to The Jew of Malta as "dealing with the thirst for universal wealth."[90]

Percy Hazen Houston uses the word "yearning" and sees the plays as "tragedies of yearning." He sees Tamburlaine as "the tragedy of the world conqueror" (i.e., he who yearns to conquer the world), Doctor Faustus as "the tragedy of yearning for universal knowledge," and The Jew of Malta as "the tragedy of yearning for boundless riches, and the lawless will that would use them."[91] Houston does not give Marlowe's ability as a philosopher quite so much credit as does Wendell. Wendell says that Marlowe expresses a "profound truth"[92] in his plays, while Houston admits only that Marlowe is "trying to

[89] Wendell, pp. 99-100.

[90] Edwin Greenlaw, An Outline of the Literature of the English Renaissance (Chicago: Benj. H. Sanborn and Co., 1916), p. 66.

[91] Percy Hazen Houston, Main Currents of English Literature (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1926), p. 101.

[92] Wendell, p. 100.

work to some consistent sense of the limitations of life"[93] in his plays. Houston writes that,

> the poet tells ... how each of his heroes fell through tempting fate beyond the limits set to human will.... [and] all of them pay the penalty to a merciless foe for their excesses,[94]

but the comment rings somewhat hollow as Houston does not say who or what constitutes the "merciless foe."

R.B. Pace also perceives a common theme, which he says is "exaggerated ambition" in the plays. He writes that "A feature common to them [Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta and Edward II] all is the presentation of a particular ambition in exaggerated form."[95] He says that Barabas' ambition is to have wealth: "Barabas the Jew, prototype of Shylock, desires wealth and commits a series of crimes to attain his desire,"[96] and that Faustus' is to have knowledge.[97] Few additional details are provided in Pace's commentary.

I.J. Semper's opinion concords with those of Symonds, Houston, Greenlaw, and Wendell in that the common theme is one of yearning for something, and like Symonds and Wendell he perceives that what the yearner desires in all the plays is something limitless and unbounded. His words—

> In Tamburlaine Marlowe tells the story of a man who yearns for boundless power, in Faustus ... of a seeker

[93] Houston, p. 102.

[94] Ibid., p. 102.

[95] Roy Bennett Pace, English Literature (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1918), p. 70.

[96] Ibid., p. 71.

[97] Ibid., p. 70.

> after immeasurable knowledge and pleasure, and in The Jew of Malta .... of one who strives for unlimited riches,[98]

are a virtual paraphrase, if not an indirect quotation from Houston.

Some writers describe the common theme not as longing or yearning but as strong passion. Their comments reveal that this strong overriding passion may involve longing or yearning, but it is the passion itself that is the common theme, not the type of passion. J. G. Lewis, for example, writes that,

> Marlowe's usual method was to personify some strong passion and make everything else subservient to it. The natural result was one-character plays [author's emphasis]. Thus Tamburlaine is personified ambition. Faustus personified craving for learning and pleasure, whilst in the next play, The Jew of Malta, we have a personification of lust for wealth,[99]

and Crawshaw's criticism provides further testimony:

> Each of [the four plays] may be said to represent some dominating idea or ruling passion:... The Jew of Malta ... portrays the lust for wealth and vengeance. Barabas is a monster whose greed knows no bounds, and whose hate knows no pity.[100]

Neilson and Thorndike are also proponents of the "overriding passion" theory, but they add to the theory that the possessor of this passion is always a man with a strong personality:

> in each play Marlowe presents a man of commanding personality swayed by an overpowering passion. In Tamburlaine it is ambition; in Doctor Faustus,

[98] I. J. Semper, A Shakespeare Study Guide (New York: The Century Co., 1931), p. 36.

[99] J. G. Lewis, Christopher Marlowe: Outlines of His Life and Works (1891; rpt. Folcroft, Pa.: The Folcroft Press Inc., 1969), p. 17.

[100] Crawshaw, pp. 114-16.

> desire for knowledge, in the Jew of Malta, greed of wealth.[101]

Like Wendell, they are interested in Marlowe's philosophical conclusions in the plays, noting that,

> The tragic fate lies in the certainty that these inordinate desires will lead to disappointment and defeat. The deaths of these protagonists are not merely the close of life, they are the catastrophes which end struggles that reveal the greatness of human effort,[102]

and about The Jew of Malta specifically they state only that "In [this play], the hero who declaims magnificently in the beginning soon becomes an absurd and monstrous villain who meets a well-earned end."[103]

Whether writers adhered to the "yearner" theory or the "passion" theory is perhaps not as significant as the fact that they did recognize and describe, in a fair amount of detail, a common theme in Marlowe's four main plays. This discovery helped to steer Marlowe criticism away from the tendency to offer short, general or repetitive comments about his life, death and works and towards a greater interest in the secrets to be discovered in the texts themselves.

[101] William Allan Neilson and Ashley Horace Thorndike, A History of English Literature, 2nd ed., rev. (1920; rpt. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 124.

[102] Ibid., p. 124.

[103] Ibid., pp. 124-25.

SECTION II

A PROBLEM PLAY

CHAPTER THREE

CHRONOLOGICAL POSITION IN THE MARLOWE CANON

Boas, Cohen, Craik, Fleay, Hazlitt, Lewis, F. Mathew, Morley, Phelps, Ribner, Rowse, Waller, Ward

Determining the exact year in which Marlowe wrote the play[1] has been a difficult task for critics because the copy text, and only extant early edition of the play, is the quarto of 1633,[2] and "there is no evidence that it was printed before 1633."[3] William Lyon Phelps writes that "no one knows when it was written nor when it was first

[1] Some writers (proponents of the bilateral cipher theory) have claimed that Bacon wrote The Jew of Malta and other works commonly attributed to Marlowe and Shakespeare. Examination of the bilateral cipher theory is beyond the scope of this study. My own investigation has led me to conclude that Sir Francis Bacon did not write the play. Those who wish to pursue the evidence and the conclusions of the bilateral cipher theory should consult Parker Woodward's Euphes the Peripatican (London: Gay and Bird, 1907), pp. 75-76, and Tudor Problems (London: Gay and Hancock Ltd., 1912), p. 134; and W. S. Booth's Some Acrostic Signatures of Francis Bacon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), pp. 211-12.

[2] F. S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study (1940; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 129.

[3] A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, eds., The Cambridge History of English Literature, (1907; rpt. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1933), V, 163.

acted,"[4] but there has been considerable speculation on both accounts.

A. L. Rowse, F.S. Boas, T. W. Craik and Henry Morley claim that Marlowe wrote the play sometime in the period between late 1589 and 1592. Rowse states: "It is generally held that The Jew of Malta belongs to 1589 or early 1590."[5] Most critics[6] have agreed with Fleay[7] and Morley[8] that the words "now the Guise is dead," (line 3) spoken by Machevill in the Prologue to the play, refer to the assassination of the Duke of Guise, which occurred "two days after Christmas, 1588,"[9] and have therefore concluded that the play was written after the end of 1588. As Henslowe's Diary records that a performance of the play took place on February 26, 1592,[10] it would seem reasonable to conclude that the play was written before that time. Irving Ribner believes it was written between late 1588 and 1592 for this reason.[11]

[4] William Lyon Phelps, Christopher Marlowe, Masterpieces of the English Drama Series, ed. Felix E. Schelling (New York: American Book Co., 1912), p. 15.

[5] A.L. Rowse, Christopher Marlowe: A Biography (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1964), pp. 81-82.

[6] See, for example F.S. Boas, p. 129, who places it in 1589.

[7] Frederick Gard Fleay, A Biographical Chronical of the English Drama (London: Reeves and Turner, 1891), II, 61.

[8] Henry Morley, "Exit Marlowe," English Writers: An Attempt Towards a History of English Literature (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1893), X, 112-13.

[9] Ibid., pp. 112-13.

[10] Fleay, p. 95.

[11] Irving Ribner, "Preface," The Jew of Malta: Text and Major Criticism, ed. Irving Ribner (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1970), p. x.

Rowse assigns the play to 1589 or early 1590, and Helen Louise Cohen allocates it to 1590-91.[12]

T. W. Craik bases his conclusion that it was written in 1589 or 1590 partly on stylistic evidence, asserting that the play is "later than Tamburlaine, earlier than Edward II and is usually placed before Doctor Faustus."[13] A. W. Ward, who designates it to the years between 1588 and 1591, also cites stylistic evidence: "The internal evidence of style places it unmistakeably between [Doctor Faustus and Tamburlaine] and the historical tragedy of Edward II"; as well as the evidence of "now the Guise is dead," which, he states "cannot well have been interpolated."[14]

Hazlitt offers no opinion concerning the date of composition, writing only that the play was "Licensed for the press, 17th May, 1594. It had been performed as early as 1591. Printed for Nicholas Vavasour ... 1633."[15] Hazlitt provides no information as to where he obtained the date 1591, which is unfortunate since Henslowe's Diary records the earliest performance as 1592.

J. G. Lewis is also cautious and seeks safety in ambiguity, noting that the play was "produced [it is not clear in his use of this

[12] Helen Louise Cohen, Milestones of the Drama (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940), p. 115.

[13] T. [homas] W. Craik, ed., The Jew of Malta, New Mermaid Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. viii.

[14] Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature, p. 338.

[15] William Carew Hazlitt, Handbook to the Popular, Poetical and Dramatic Literature of Great Britain From the Invention of Printing to the Restoration (London: John Russell Smith, 1867), p. 374.

word, whether Lewis means "written," "acted," or both] about 1589."[16] F. Mathew cavalierly dismisses the issue of the play's date with his comment that the dates of all Marlowe's works are uncertain.[17] Indeed, on the basis of the evidence that the Duke of Guise did die in 1588 and that the play was performed at least as early as 1592, and due to the lack of any concrete evidence suggesting an exact year, it seems wisest to concede that the play was written between late 1588 and the year 1592 and to stop short of designating one particular year.

[16] Lewis, pp. 17-18.

[17] F. Mathew, An Image of Shakespeare (London: J. Cape, 1922), p. 152.

CHAPTER FOUR

A WHOLE OR TWO PARTS?

Bullen, Dyce, Edmunds, Ervine, Hallam, Luce, Pinkerton, Smith, Swinburne, Symonds, Turner, Woodberry

Mid-nineteenth century criticism displays a growing awareness that the first two acts are considerably different from the last three. One group of writers highly praises the first two acts, and—with varying degrees of disapproval—lambastes the final three. These critics maintain that the play deteriorates in the second part, and thus perceive the second part (or, in some cases, the whole play) as a failure. For example, the anonymous author of an article appearing in European Magazine in 1818 believes that the stage revival of the play in that year was well received by the audience only because of Edmund Kean's portrayal of Barabas. He writes that only the first act is good; the "succeeding ones are by no means equal to the promise of the first" and the "catastrophe [in Act V] is ... forced and artificial."[1] He remains generally unimpressed with the play.

Some critics consider the entire play a disappointment or of little worth because of the poor quality of the last three acts. Alexander Dyce writes: "the latter part [after Act II] is in every

[1] "'The Jew' Revived," European Magazine, 73 (May 1818), 429.

respect so inferior, that we rise from a perusal of the whole with a feeling akin to disappointment,"[2] and Charles Turner notes that the "interest, excited by [the play's] wild and fearful incidents, is repelled by the unnatural ferocity of Barabas."[3] Turner believes that in the first two acts, there is a "sustained vigour" unmatched by any Elizabethan play except those of Shakespeare, and that only the latter acts "prevent its being placed in an equally high rank with Marlowe's other tragedies."[4]

Pinkerton also praises the first two acts, making particular mention of the play's opening soliloquy: "Marlowe ... began nobly by a monologue, where the Jew meditates upon his wealth, which may rank with the finest that our literature owns,"[5] but, he goes on to say, "As a drama, this ... cannot be called a triumph" because "The excellence of the first two acts is ill sustained by those which follow."[6]

S. J. Ervine's opinion of the play is decidedly low. He severely criticizes the last four acts, reserving praise not for the first two acts, but for the first act alone:

> after the first act the play went completely to pieces, and became a sort of medieval moving-picture in which no attempt was made to present events either logically or naturally.

[2] Alexander Dyce, ed., The Works of Christopher Marlowe (London: William Pickering, 1850), I, xxi.

[3] Charles Edward Turner, Our Great Writers (St. Petersburg: A. Minx, 14 Nevsky Prospect, 1864), I, 126.

[4] Ibid., p. 126.

[5] Percy E. Pinkerton, pp. xx-xxi.

[6] Ibid., pp. xx-xxi.

[7] S. J. Ervine, "The Jew of Malta," The Observer, Nov. 12, 1922, p. 110.

H. Hallam praises the first two acts:

> The first two acts of The Jew of Malta are more vigorously conceived, both as to character and circumstance, than any other Elizabethan play, except those of Shakespeare,[8]

but he summarily dismisses the last three acts as "a tissue of uninteresting crimes and slaughter."[9]

A. H. Bullen is similarily delighted with the first two acts and disappointed about the last three:

> The masterful grasp that marks the opening scene was a new thing in English tragedy. Language so strong, so terse, so dramatic, had never been heard before on the English stage. In the first two acts there is not a trace of juvenility; all is conceived largely and worked out in firm, bold strokes. Hardly Shakespeare's touch is more absolutely true and unfaltering.... But in the last three acts vigorous drawing is exchanged for caricature; for a sinister life-like figure we have a grotesque stage-villain ...,[10]

and he expresses amazement at "this extraordinary transformation":

> How this extraordinary transformation was affected, why the poet, who started with such clear-eyed vision and stern resolution, swerved so blindly and helplessly from the path, is a question that may well perplex critics.[11]

Swinburne describes the latter part of The Jew of Malta as displaying "the swift impatient journeywork of a rough and ready hand; [and] ... compulsory hurry in the discharge of a task something less than

[8] H. Hallam, Introduction to the Literature of Europe (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1880), p. 265.

[9] Ibid., p. 265.

[10] A. H. Bullen in Moulton, p. 133.

[11] Ibid., p. 133.

welcome...."[12] The anonymous author of an article appearing in Fraser's Magazine (1853) believes that the play changes for the worse after the second act, and blames Marlowe's inexpert hand for the failure of the play:

> The character of the Jew is drawn with great force, and in the earlier part of the play with great truth and even delicacy; but as he proceeded with his work, Marlowe suffered his natural tendency to exaggeration; coupled with the knowledge of what was the standard notion of a Jewish usurer in the eyes of the vulgar, completely to run away with him....[13]

This idea that Marlowe lost control of his initial conception of Barabas and failed to bring his play to a fitting conclusion, is also adhered to by G. B. Smith.

> The passions of the Jew are greatly distorted, and before Marlowe has arrived at the end of his drama, he has lost control over its leading character. From a startling realism with which he is conceived and elaborated in the earlier acts we pass on to a grotesque exhibition of fiendish traits without truthfulness to nature till we arrive at a conclusion which, instead of evoking the sense of the sublime, rather excites the sense of the ludicrous.[14]

Smith refers facetiously to Barabas as an "exceedingly pleasant individual" and says Barabas "is made to overreach himself at the end ... in an absurd manner, and such as we should not have predicted upon our first introduction to him."[15] Smith asserts, "It is here that we think the dramatist has failed" and concludes:

[12] Swinburne, A Study of Shakespeare, p. 235.

[13] "Christopher Marlowe," Fraser's Magazine, 47 (Feb. 1853), 232-33.

[14] G.B. S[mith], p. 344.

[15] Ibid., p. 345.

> The second part of the drama does not display the careful workmanship to be found in the preceding acts; it is as if the artificer had become tired of his work, and having conceived his character lacked the patience to follow out its proportions.[16]

E. W. Edmunds' theory is reminiscent of the early writers who were unable to separate Marlowe's work from Marlowe the man (see Chapter One and Chapter Two). Edmunds suggests that Marlowe's "irregular character" is to blame for the difference between the two parts of the play:

> After the second act ... [Marlowe] ... seems to have grown careless ... and to have become heedless of the mutual harmony of the scenes. Or, it may be that the theme was too big for a man of such irregular character fully to handle ...;[17]

and Edmunds further pretends to an understanding of Marlowe's emotional make-up at certain given times, in his attempt to explain the reason for the difference:

> The play does not maintain the high level of the first two acts simply because Marlowe's mood had changed, and he could not detach himself from himself in the way required.[18]

That Edmunds could not possibly have known what Marlowe's mood was when he wrote the play, or whether or not Marlowe could "detach himself from himself in the way required," scarcely needs to be pointed out. Although Edmunds' remarks betray an arrogant assumption of omniscient understanding of the workings of a writer's mind, they are, actually, not unlike the remarks of many early critics of Marlowe's work (see Chapter One and Chapter Two).

[16] Smith, p. 345.

[17] Edmunds, p. 180.

[18] Ibid., p. 180.

J. A. Symonds laments what he perceives as a dramatic change in quality between the first two acts and the last three:

> Swinburne ... has styled Barabas "a mere mouth-piece...." With this verdict we must unwillingly concur. Considering the rapid and continual descent from bathos unto bathos after the splendid first and second acts, so large in outline, so vigorous in handling, so rich in verse, through the mad abominations and hysterical melodrama of the last three acts; no sane critic will maintain that the Jew of Malta was a love-child of its maker's genius.[19]

He attempts to explain the difference, partially to excuse Marlowe for the "patent inequalities of his third tragedy" by blaming "stage-necessities and press of time [which] compelled the poet to complete in haste as task-work what he had conceived with love, and blocked out at his leisure."[20]

M. Luce also agrees that "Marlowe's development of Barabas begins well, but degenerates into monstrosity and buffoonery," however, he claims that Marlowe planned the last three acts that way "no doubt to please the rabble of an earlier theatre (Circa 1589)."[21] George Edward Woodberry's opinion of the play suggests a similar belief that Marlowe pandered to the crowd, as he alludes to the last three acts as "the tail of the old monster"—a reference to the medieval morality plays popular in medieval times and which still lingered in the English countryside in Marlowe's day:

[19] Symonds, p. 494.

[20] Ibid., p. 494.

[21] Morton Luce, A Handbook to the Works of William Shakespeare, 2nd ed., rev. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1909), p. 200.

> In The Jew of Malta, even if the first two acts are fashioned by dramatic genius as no other but Shakespeare could have moulded them, the last three taper off into the tail of the old monster that had flopped and shuffled on the mediaeval boards on every Saint's day.[22]

The group which perceives a breakdown in the play after the second act is thus not characterized by unanimous agreement as to the type of breakdown, its effect upon the play, or its causes; but it is a relatively large assembly of critics and it has had substantial influence on critical perception of the play. The work of this group has not gone unchallenged, and it has led to the exploration of other avenues in criticism of The Jew of Malta, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

[22] George Edward Woodberry, The Inspiration of Poetry (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1910), p. 41.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY

Bevington, Boas, Bradbrook, A.M. Clark, Craik, Crofts, Eliot, Ellis-Fermor, Fleay, Friedman, Harbage, Henderson, Ingram, Knoll, Levin, Mabon, Masinton, F. Mathew, Maxwell, Phelps, Redlich, Ribner, Rowse, Strong, Taylor, Van Fossen, Waller, Ward, F.P. Wilson

Some later nineteenth century as well as several twentieth century critics claim that the difference between the first two acts of the play and the last three is so great that the only explanation for it is that Marlowe was not the sole author of the play. C.B. Mabon, for example, writes that,

> it is probable that only the two first acts are from Marlowe's pen. These are so finely conceived and executed that it is hard to believe that the melodramatic and farcical conclusion of this play should have been drawn by the same hand. It is in manifest disharmony with the original conception of the plot.[1]

F. Mathew refers to the latter part of the play as "immature Scenes which were added to Marlowe's noble beginning,"[2] concluding that "only the first act and the first scene of the second act

[1] C.B. Mabon, "The Jew in English poetry and drama," Jewish Quarterly Review, 11 (Apr. 1899), 413.

[2] F. Mathew, p. 37.

... are his,"[3] Mathew, like Luce and Woodberry,[4] attributes the change in the latter part of the play to Marlowe's desire to produce a popular stage-piece, but his view differs from theirs in that he insists that Marlowe himself did not write the last acts, even though he may have given permission for others to finish his drama:

> Then Marlowe cast the beginning of this Tragical Poem aside and allowed others to tack a childish Melodrama to it when he saw that no Company would dare to perform it, or he finished it and others destroyed the rest of it and added the part adapted to the popular taste.[5]

Una Ellis-Fermor has a slightly different view of the authorship question. She contends that Marlowe "left the play to other hands after he had finished the first two acts, sketched the outlines of the next two, and written a rough draft of the fifth,"[6] basing this supposition on

> the development of the character of Barabas, which moves clearly through the first and second acts, is lost sight of entirely in the next two but reappears, approximately as we might have expected it in the fifth.[7]

She adds that "all power and inspiration seems to have gone, except for a rare phrase or two," out of Barabas' character in the third and fourth acts, which is certainly a debatable point and leads the

[3] F. Mathew, p. 152.

[4] See above, pp. 49-50.

[5] F. Mathew, p. 153.

[6] Una M. Ellis-Fermor, Christopher Marlowe (London: Methuen, 1927), p. 97.

[7] Ibid., p. 97.

reader to wonder whether Ellis-Fermor's insistence that Marlowe did not write the two acts is based—at least partly—on her inability to understand and/or explain Barabas' actions and character in this part of the play.[8] In any case, Ellis-Fermor concludes: "It is perhaps wiser to base any opinions of Marlowe's work in this play only on Acts I and II, and, with reservations, on Act V."[9]

Some writers in this group claim that Thomas Heywood revised and/or altered the play. Frederick Gard Fleay is a member of this group. He writes that, "In the scenes with Bellamira and Pilia there is a good deal not by Marlowe. This is not due to original collaboration, but to alteration by Heywood C.1632 ...,"[10] and urges the reader to note the similarity between the scene concerning the friars in Heywood's The Captives, and the friar scenes in The Jew of Malta.

Arthur Melville Clark sees the play as a "standard melodrama of crime and revenge," but adds that "the degeneration ... after the first two acts must puzzle the careful reader."[11] Like Fleay, Clark claims that Thomas Heywood is responsible for parts of The Jew of Malta. He is skeptical that Marlowe was capable of the "buffoonery"[12] in the third and fourth acts, and he believes that Marlowe's use of very little prose in the first two acts indicates that the prose-laden

[8] See Chapters 6, 11 and 12 for further discussion of Ellis-Fermor's work.

[9] Ellis-Fermor, p. 97.

[10] Fleay, p. 61.

[11] Arthur Melville Clark, Thomas Heywood (1931; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), pp. 289, 287.

[12] Ibid., p. 294.

third and fourth acts are not his:

> Even if Marlowe were capable of such buffoonery as fills [Acts] iii and iv, he would surely never have devoted to it the very core of his tragedy and have pitched the central acts in prose. The only prose outside iii and iv is in i.2 (the Governor's offer to the Jews), ii.3 (a few short speeches, not absolutely certainly in prose), and v.1 (Bellamira, Pilia Borza and Ithamore before the Governor).[13]

The fact that there is little prose outside of the third and fourth acts is scarcely sufficient evidence to substantiate a claim that Marlowe did not write the acts. As substantiation for his contention that Marlowe was not the author of these acts, Clark states that Ithamore's words to Bellamira in IV.ii.106-16 — "Content: but we will leave this paltry land, /Shall live with me and be my love" — constitute "quite obviously an imitation "[14] of Marlowe's own pastoral lyric "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." However, his conclusion is not necessarily correct. Marlowe could have been parodying his own work to underline the twistedness of the "love" affair between the two very un-pastoral figures of Bellamira and Ithamore. Clark offers further substantiation attesting to Marlowe's non-authorship of parts of the play. He maintains that the episode concerning the strangling of the friar was dramatized first by Heywood in The Captives, and that in The Jew of Malta it is "told in the allusive way in which a person retells a story he has already told ... [it is a] ragged episode."[15] Unfortunately, Clark fails to supply precise examples from the text to illustrate the "allusive way" in

[13] Arthur Melville Clark, p. 294.

[14] Ibid., p. 293.

[15] Ibid., p. 292.

which the story is, supposedly, recounted. His conclusion is, once again, somewhat shaky and is one which later critics disparage. Levin, for instance, considers it more likely that The Jew of Malta influenced The Captives.[16] Considering the above examples from Clark's work, Clark's assertion that,

> It is possible ... that in the last three acts of The Jew of Malta there lies concealed the bare outline [of Barabas] which Marlowe sketched but in which he had lost all interest and which he had abandoned in such a state as to invite the sacrilege of revision,[17]

is somewhat less than convincing.

Philip Henderson is a proponent of the theory that Kyd most likely collaborated with Marlowe on the play:

> For the last three acts Marlowe seems to have called in the help of Kyd, and at once the play falls from its earlier level of great poetry and degenerates into a melodrama built up, like The Spanish Tragedy and Titus Andronicus almost entirely upon treachery.[18]

He cites as his reason for the claim of Kyd's collaboration that,

> The play abounds in so many passages of patterned verse in the manner of The Spanish Tragedy, and such expressions as "the hopeless daughter of a hapless Jew," that it is only reasonable to conclude that it is the collaborative work of Marlowe and Kyd.[19]

He adds that when Marlowe and Kyd were writing in the same room in 1591 "it is quite probable that they were then engaged on The Jew of

[16] Harry Levin, The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), p. 96.

[17] Arthur Melville Clark, p. 287.

[18] Philip Henderson, And Morning in His Eyes: A Book about Christopher Marlowe (London: Boriswood Ltd., 1937), p. 257.

[19] Ibid., p. 258.

Malta."[20] Henderson also holds Henslowe responsible for some alterations in the play, stating that,

> The Jew was one of Henslowe's most popular pieces and also one of the oldest. It is clear that, in conformity with his usual practice he must have employed one or other of his smart young men to polish it up for later productions.[21]

He contends that Heywood "or some other hand" may have been responsible for the "opening of the second act: 'Thus like the sad presaging raven that tolls/With fatal curses towards these Christians,'"[22] although he does not say why he believes that someone other than Marlowe may have written the passage. He concludes: "As we have it, there is very little Marlowe left in the last four acts."[23] If Henderson's case for the collaboration of Marlowe and Kyd and the "polishing" by Heywood's men were iron-clad, there might indeed be "very little Marlowe" left in these acts. However, Henderson's argument that Kyd's patterned verse is obvious in the play is not persuasive. He fails to prove that Marlowe could not have been merely influenced by Kyd's verse and have consciously or unconsciously incorporated it into his own style. Furthermore, the fact that Marlowe and Kyd shared a room for a given period of time does not necessarily imply—and certainly is no proof—that they wrote a play together during that time. In addition, Henderson does not provide sufficient supporting evidence for his claim that it was Heywood's

[20] Henderson, p. 258.

[21] Ibid., p. 263.

[22] Ibid., p. 263.

[23] Ibid., p. 263.

custom to have plays "polished" by "smart young men," or for his assumption that Heywood had The Jew of Malta revised in this way. Henderson's theory of multiple authorship is highly speculative and not very convincing, but it is, nevertheless, indicative of the earnest assertiveness with which this group of writers maintains that Marlowe was not the play's sole author.

Response to the dual authorship theory is a dominant theme of criticism from the late 1880's through the early 1900's. These responses fall into several categories, but the categories are not mutually exclusive. One category insists that (1) the play is all Marlowe's work; and (2) the last part of the play is inferior to the first. Critics in this group explain the deterioration in quality from the first to the second part of the play by maintaining that (A) Marlowe lacked the artistic ability to fulfill the promise of the first two acts; and/or (B) Marlowe was more interested in the play's commercial success than its artistic perfection. In a somewhat condescending article[24] about Marlowe's work, Ellen Crofts writes:

> So great is the falling off in characterisation after the first and second acts, that it has been suggested that only these were by Marlowe's hand—that the rest of the play was written by some other and inferior dramatist. The most likely theory, however, is that Marlowe set for himself a task too difficult for his yet untried power of characterisation; that he was struggling ... towards a higher form of art, but that habit and perhaps stress of time checked him, and he fell into the lower and

[24] Crofts claims, for example, that Marlowe "might in time have acquired that deeper insight, that tolerance which is only another word for sympathy, which especially distinguishes Shakespeare, and which rarely comes save to those who have lived a long and independent life full of experience." Ellen Crofts, Chapters in the History of English Literature (London: Revingtons, 1884), p. 172.

more familiar groove.[25]

Crofts cites approvingly Charles Lamb's comments about Barabas as a mere monster, summing up her stance by adding "Thus degenerated Marlowe's first attempt at characterisation," and concluding that in the play "there is little ingenuity shown in the management of the plot: it consists simply of a sequence of horrors without any inner thread of unity."[26] Crofts provides no detailed analysis of the text to support her contentions, however.

Ideas expressed by A.L. Rowse correspond with the assumptions of critics in this category. Rowse is convinced that the play is all Marlowe's and he heatedly attacks academics who refuse to believe that Marlowe wrote the last acts, implying that these critics are suffering from academic snobbery:

> Academic critics have made very heavy weather of the contrast between the first half of the play, and the second; but in the world of real writing authors are not always perfectionists, and are more apt to think in terms of popular success. And certainly Marlowe achieved it. This self-willed young man of genius was not writing a play to please the professors.... but to please excitable and primitive Elizabethan playgoers. Some critics have gone so far as to doubt whether Marlowe wrote the last three acts, or had possibly a collaborator. There is not the least reason to suppose this, and though the text we have is a late one, it is on the whole a good one, pretty close to Marlowe's own hand.[27]

Rowse concedes that the play presents a problem to critics because "the first two Acts are on a higher level than anything he had done hitherto.... [and] Barabas ... seems to offer the makings of a truly

[25] Crofts, p. 177.

[26] Ibid., pp. 180-81.

[27] Rowse, p. 83.

tragic character like Shylock.... But Marlowe did not go on to do this."[28] The reason Marlowe did not go on to make Barabas a "truly tragic character," Rowse claims, is that "he had not Shakespeare's unparalleled sympathy with human beings and the condition in which they are caught" and "he intended Barabas ... to be a Machiavellian villain."[29] He describes the play's ending scenes as "crude melodrama, calculated to appeal to the groundlings—as it did" and rhetorically asks "What was wrong with that, from Marlowe's point of view?"[30] Rowse also suggests that Marlowe may have hurried the last three acts, either because of theatrical demands or because of events in his personal life, such as his "brief spell in Newgate jail."[31]

L.A.G. Strong and Monica Redlich also believe that haste, rather than dual authorship, accounts for the difference between the two parts of the play: "The Jew of Malta he finished in a hurry,"[32] but they provide no supporting evidence.

Some writers believe that although the text may be imperfect and revisions may have been made, the play does fulfill Marlowe's original intentions. Alfred Harbage belongs to this group. Although he is interested primarily in the nature of evil as exhibited by Barabas, and not in the authorship question, he does write that he thinks the play is all Marlowe's, slightly cut, and that there is no

[28] Rowse, p. 83.

[29] Ibid., p. 83.

[30] Ibid., p. 83.

[31] Ibid., p. 84.

[32] L.A.G. Strong and Monica Redlich, Life in English Literature (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1932), p. 98.

real proof that Marlowe was not the sole author. He asserts that,

> We do not know when The Jew of Malta was written, or in what form it stood when it left Marlowe's hands. It is better to admit this fact than to base critical judgements upon a hypothetical chronology ...,[33]

but he argues for the artistic wholeness of the play, and—unlike Crofts and Rowse, who suggest that the last three acts are of little worth in the play—Harbage insists that while the last acts may not be as interesting literarily as the first two, they probably were conceived and planned by Marlowe:

> Although the first part of the play has the greater literary interest, since in it ideas and emotions are given fuller poetic expression, we cannot conclude that it alone is representative of Marlowe. Any cutting or other form of modification probably only accentuated a characteristic which already existed—as action progressively tended to crowd out discursive speech. Long ago, Henry Hallam shrewdly attributed this feature of the play to a general tendency in Elizabethan tragedies of blood.[34]

Like Luce and Woodberry,[35] Harbage emphasizes the belief that Marlowe wrote the play primarily for stage production. Noting that "Although there is more and more sacrifice of poetic to theatrical opportunity as the play proceeds, The Jew of Malta is from the beginning pre-eminently a 'stage piece,'"[36] he concludes, "I feel sure that the ethical, if not in equal measure, the aesthetic qualities

[33] Alfred Harbage, "Innocent Barabas", Tulane Drama Review, 8, 4 (1964), 50.

[34] Ibid., p. 51.

[35] See above, pp. 49-50, 52.

[36] Harbage, p. 51.

of Marlowe's original play are fairly represented in the text we have."[37]

A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller believe that the play is basically Marlowe's, but that the text is impure:

> It would be foolish to claim that the texts are approximately pure; but till a more exact canon of criticism than that a young genius may not be astoundingly unequal in his handling be available, we prefer to hold him responsible for nearly all that goes to the making of the current texts.[38]

Boas is of a similar opinion. He asserts that it is "very unlikely that the play has reached us exactly as it came from Marlowe's pen," but he offers critical comment on the play as if it were all by Marlowe. He states that it has not been proven that the scenes are by Heywood, noting that "They are not marked by [Heywood's] peculiarities of diction and they are not so extraneous to the structure of the play as might be supposed."[39]

M.C. Bradbrook observes that there are very great differences between the first part of the play and the last, but she does not consider the authorship question to be of crucial significance one way or the other. In a footnote to her own work, Bradbrook writes: "I have assumed single authorship, feeling personally unfitted to pronounce judgement," and later she adds that "To the influence of Kyd I think Marlowe's development of a new technique must be ascribed," although she is not willing to go as far as to claim—as

[37] Harbage, p. 51.

[38] Ward and Waller, p. 165.

[39] Boas, pp. 131, 130.

Henderson does—that Kyd wrote, or collaborated with Marlowe on, the play.[40]

John Henry Ingram, who is primarily interested in the characterization of Barabas as the play's unifying feature, prefers the thesis that Marlowe rushed his work towards the end, but he concedes the possibility that other hands altered the last part of Marlowe's work: "Haste in execution has decidedly injured the play; but ... it is possible that some later interpolations may have been made to suit the popular taste."[41] Like Bradbrook, he is not overly concerned with the possibility that "later interpolations" were made; moreover, he does not believe that the last three acts—whether by Marlowe or not—detract significantly from the fine characterization of Barabas. He goes so far as to maintain that "despite the fiendish ferocity which the hero ultimately displays, he is, after all, the most natural and lifelike of his author's creations."[42]

Richard W. Van Fossen also sees The Jew of Malta as all Marlowe's work, but he differs from most writers in this group in that he denies that the play breaks down after the first two acts. He insists that,

> the play does not [author's emphasis] break in two: we do not have a serious play for two acts and a farce for three; rather, the serious and comic elements in the play are present together from the

[40] M.C. Bradbrook, "The Jew of Malta and Edward II," 1935; rpt. in Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Clifford Leech (New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1964), p. 122.

[41] John Henry Ingram, Christopher Marlowe and his Associates (1904; rpt. New York: Cooper Square Publishers Inc., 1970), p. 157.

[42] Ibid., p. 157.

beginning of Act I to the end of Act V.[43] He argues that the play is consistent in terms of characters and events, noting that "It would be foolish to deny that Barabas has at the beginning ... a humanity and dignity that he soon loses; in production, however, the impression of humanity and dignity would not dominate so exclusively as it does when the play is read."[44] Van Fossen makes the valid point that Barabas' physical appearance—including the ridiculously large stage nose—would have been evident to the audience from the beginning, even though it is not referred to in the text until II.iii.174; and he contends that in performance the opening soliloquy could give a "decidedly ambivalent first impression."[45] It is interesting that writers who argue for separate authorship and the breakdown of the play have not thought of the above point, which is so apparent to the theatrical medium—or, if they have considered it, have not referred to it in print.

Robert E. Knoll states that revisions have definitely been made to the play: "This 1633 text, our only source for the play, is full of errors; it shows unmistakable signs of revision, probably by Thomas Heywood ..."[46] but, like Harbage,[47] he is convinced that the play follows Marlowe's basic intentions in spite of the errors and

[43] Richard W. Van Fossen, ed., The Jew of Malta, Regents Renaissance Drama Series (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, and London: E. Arnold, 1964), p. xvii.

[44] Ibid., p. xvii.

[45] Ibid., p. xviii.

[46] Robert E. Knoll, Christopher Marlowe, Twayne's English Author Series, No. 74 (New York: Twayne Publishing Co., 1969), p. 92.

[47] See pp. 59-61.

revisions, and that it was conceived and written by him. He mentions the fact that some critics believe the play breaks down "thematically and dramatically at the end of Act II,"[48] but, like Van Fossen, Knoll says that there is no reason to believe so:

> Although the tempo of the action increases in Act III, Marlowe's careful attention to general structure and his carelessness in detail are what we have seen before. Indeed, all the action of the later parts ... [has] been carefully anticipated.[49]

Like Luce, Woodberry and Harbage, Knoll maintains that it was Marlowe's intention that the play be entertaining above all else. He says: "it is calculated entertainment," and he cautions that "we must not overread it ... it is not of a piece."[50] Knoll asserts that Marlowe's haste in execution is responsible for the "unevenness" of the play and that "he [Marlowe] conceived boldly and executed carelessly."[51] While he does not overtly attack the theory of separate authorship, Knoll does, by his insistence on the structural cohesiveness of the play, disparage the theory.

A group maintaining that the entire play is by Marlowe consists of critics who perceive the play as an example of a certain genre or type of literature; or who perceive a dominant theme in the play, insisting that the presence of a dominant theme proves that the play is a planned artistic whole and therefore entirely written by Marlowe.

William Lyon Phelps sees it as belonging to "the Tragedy of

[48] Knoll, p. 98.

[49] Ibid., p. 98.

[50] Ibid., p. 102.

[51] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

Blood school that runs like a red stream through the entire course of Elizabethan drama."[52] Phelps cites Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy and Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus as the first two plays of this school and describes its general characteristics:

> the majority of the dramatis personae die violently in the works of this school ... [and] there is usually a hired assassin who believes in crime for crime's sake. He takes a joyous and artistic delight in deeds of the most revolting nature. The scoundrel Aaron, in Titus Andronicus, is typical of this stock figure....[53]

Furthermore, Phelps contends that,

> Ithamore fills this role [i.e., of hired assassin] acceptably; for Barabas, to test him, describes some of the playful avocations of his own leisure moments: "As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights/ Sometimes I go about and poison wells." To which virtuous sentiments Ithamore cheerfully replies: "One time I was an hostler in an inn,/And in the night time secretly would I steal/To travellers' chambers, and there cut their throats."[54]

Phelps, like Van Fossen, denies that there is a breakdown in the play:

> The critics seem mostly to have decided that the first two acts are fine, and that the last three indicate a sad falling off. With this judgment I find it impossible to agree. The interest in the story is maintained steadily to the powerful and unexpected conclusion; and the climax is of that kind that has particularly delighted spectators of all ages of theatrical history, "for 'tis the sport to have the enginer/Hoist with his own petar."[55]

T.S. Eliot perceives the play as a farce:

[52] Phelps, p. 16.

[53] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[54] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[55] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

> If one takes The Jew of Malta not as a tragedy, or as a "tragedy of blood," but as a farce, the concluding act becomes intelligible; and if we attend with a careful ear to the versification, we find that Marlowe develops a tone to suit this farce, and even perhaps that this tone is his most powerful and mature tone. I say farce, but with the enfeebled humour of our times the word is a misnomer; it is the farce of the old English humour, the terribly serious, even savage comic humour, the humour which spent its last breath in the decadent genius of Dickens.[56]

Eliot cites Barabas' words: "First, be thou void of these affections:/Be mov'd at nothing, see thou pity none" (II.iii.175-177); his comments about killing sick people and poisoning wells (II.iii.179-181) and his final curses in the cauldron scene (V.v.92-94) as examples of the "prodigious caricature" Marlowe produces in this play, and he points out that "Marlowe's verse ... like some great painting and sculpture, attains its effects by something not unlike caricature."[57] Eliot's essay on the play is very short. It is unfortunate that he offers neither further elaboration of his idea, nor adequate proof or evidence from the text to support his theory, as he seems to have been the first critic to consider the play as a farce.

J.C. Maxwell opposes the theory that the play suffered corruption during the forty years between Marlowe's death and the 1632 printing:

> though the text is carelessly printed (like that of many Elizabethan and Jacobean plays) it shows no sign of being a "Bad Quarto" in the technical

[56] T.S. Eliot, Elizabethan Essays (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), p. 28.

[57] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

> sense of the term, that is, one imperfectly reconstructed by memory or some other process.[58]

Maxwell argues for the cohesiveness of the play and for single authorship. He insists that "it is hard to see these early scenes as pointing forward to anything substantially different from what we actually have."[59] Thomas W. Craik agrees with this point, citing "The long delay between the play's composition and the appearance of the first surviving text" as the main reason that "the question of authenticity"[60] has been raised. He mentions the fact that it has been thought that Heywood tampered with the play, but dismisses the idea because "Heywood makes no claim to have altered the play"[61] —a plausible observation. He also argues with Maxwell's comment about the reliability of the text.[62]

Craik notes that "attempts to trace revision or corruption of the text have resulted partly from the conviction that the play deteriorates sharply after its first two acts."[63] Like Bradbrook and Maxwell, he asserts that there is no reason to believe that "the change" in the play indicates destruction of Marlowe's work or Marlowe's failure to carry through his original intentions.[64] Craik agrees with H.S. Bennett that the fact that a "cauldron for the Jew"

[58] J.C. Maxwell in Craik, p. viii.

[59] Ibid., p. ix.

[60] Craik, p. viii.

[61] Ibid., p. viii.

[62] See Craik, p. viii.

[63] Craik, p. viii.

[64] See Craik, p. ix.

was listed in an inventory of properties for the Admiral's Men theatre company indicates that Marlowe intended the play to end the way it does.[65] By casting the play as a revenge tragedy, Craik adds weight to his contention that the plot is not dishevelled but carries out Marlowe's original intentions: "In inventing his own plot, Marlowe followed the example of Kyd, whose Spanish Tragedy (first printed in 1592) is the prototype of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy."[66]

David M. Bevington adheres to the theory that the text is entirely by Marlowe, citing the work of H.S. Bennett and J.C. Maxwell as proof.[67] Bevington sees the play as a homiletic intrigue, insisting that the last part is in keeping with this type of work: "The vicious and degenerate comedy in the later scenes is integral to the conception of the whole work as homiletic intrigue."[68]

Alan Warren Friedman supports his contention that Marlowe wrote the entire play, by citing the work of Bevington and Levin, and by claiming that the play is "a cohesive unity, a dramatic totality held together by Barabas' decreasing ability to circumscribe events."[69]

[65] Craik, p. ix.

[66] Ibid., p. x. Craik sees the play as more than just a revenge tragedy. See Chapter 17 of this essay for details.

[67] David M. Bevington, "The Jew of Malta," in Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Clifford Leech (New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1964), p. 145.

[68] Ibid., p. 145.

[69] Alan Warren Friedman, "The Shackling of Accidents in Marlowe's Jew of Malta," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 8 (1966), p. 156.

F.P. Wilson belongs to the group that presumes that Marlowe had help in writing the last three acts. Wilson's insistence that it is inconceivable that Marlowe alone wrote the last three acts displays over-zealous enthusiasm:

> the first two acts ... are the work of genius. In the last three, genius has almost disappeared and ... there are not many signs that Marlowe is at work.... To suppose that the same man who wrote the first two acts was wholly responsible for the last three is revolting to sense and sensibility.[70]

Wilson also comments on other critics' interpretation of the difference between the first and second parts of the play:

> of the view that Marlowe tired of the play after the second act and abandoned it to unworthy hands.... We should have to suppose that in writing a play Marlowe began at the beginning and wrote steadily on ...,[71]

a supposition, Wilson believes, which is not necessarily true. This is a good point, of course, but Wilson's proferred substantiation for his claim that Marlowe did not necessarily start at the beginning and write "steadily on," that is, "in Doctor Faustus we find him writing those scenes or speeches which caught his interest ... leaving the interstices to a collaborator,"[72] is itself in need of substantiation and therefore not sufficient proof. Wilson continues: "The wonder is not that so little of Marlowe's work should have survived in the last three acts but that the first two acts should have been pre-

[70] F.P. Wilson, Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare, The Clark Lectures (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 63-65.

[71] Ibid., p. 66.

[72] Ibid., p. 66.

served to us almost intact."[73] He ends his commentary with a note of lamentation: "Had the play continued on the same high level, it might have been an indictment of the cruelty and inhumanity of man."[74] This concluding lament helps to explain why Wilson's and the others' argument that Marlowe could not have written the last part of the play is not completely convincing: Wilson and the others assume that Marlowe's purpose was a grand moralizing one—something along the lines of "an indictment of the cruelty and inhumanity of man"—and that he failed in this attempt; when, in fact, there is no irrefutable evidence that this was Marlowe's purpose. All the so-called "evidence" comes from the first two acts: these writers have not tried to see the play as a whole to determine whether Marlowe may have had another purpose.

Charles G. Masinton belongs to the group that believes the play fulfills Marlowe's original intentions in spite of a possibly imperfect text and/or subsequent revisions. He notes the "drastically" altered tone of the second part of the play, but he says that this was part of Marlowe's plan in the characterization of Barabas.[75] He disagrees with the suggestion that someone else wrote the last three acts, in spite of weaknesses he acknowledges do exist in the last part:

> while Acts I and II may provide more aesthetic satisfaction than the rest of the play, the design of the

[73] F.P. Wilson, p. 66.

[74] Ibid., p. 63.

[75] Charles G. Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study in Damnation (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press., 1972), p. 57.

> whole is coherent, and the events of the plot follow logically from one another. Thus the text we have inherited (the 1633 quarto), for all its imperfections, is in all likelihood largely the work of Marlowe. At the very least we would have to say that Acts III, IV and V represent his basic conception of the play.[76]

In his essay "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" Irving Ribner develops the idea that it was Marlowe's aim to show the failure of the central character rather than the triumph, and therefore, although the last acts were definitely not by Marlowe alone (he quotes and emphatically agrees with Wilson's claim that it is impossible that the last three acts were written by the same person who wrote the first two[77]), Marlowe's original intention was not altered or obscured:

> It is difficult to assess the achievement of The Jew of Malta since we have only the corrupt quarto of 1633, with its obvious signs of Heywood's distortion in the final acts of Marlowe's original conception.
> .....
> [But] the end of the play ... should not obscure the fact that the focus of the play in its original conception must still have been upon the failure of its central character....[78]

Further discussion of Ribner's theory of Barabas' characterization appears in the seventh chapter (p. 105) and the eleventh chapter (pp. 152-56, inclusive) of this essay.

The critics themselves appear almost shockingly unaware of the

[76] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 58.

[77] Irving Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" in Essays on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Drama in Honour of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963), p. 101.

[78] Ibid., pp. 91, 101.

syndrome into which they have descended. It is therefore refreshing to see Alan Warren Friedman acknowledge the tedium of repetition which itself must be a major theme of criticism of The Jew of Malta. Friedman notes:

> Almost all of the large body of critical material on The Jew of Malta seems cast from the same monolithic mould. Each newly handled product repeats earlier discussions.... Unfortunately very few ... treat the play as a play, except perhaps to praise the first two acts as good, great or even comparable to Shakespeare's best and to damn the botch made of the last three.[79]

This tendency towards dull repetition should be asphyxiatingly apparent in criticism dealing with the authorship question. A welcome change is evident in the novel theory put forth by George Coffin Taylor. Taylor presents one of the most tempting arguments in support of the theory that Marlowe was responsible for the entire play. He has written a fascinating, well substantiated and exhaustive study entitled "Marlowe's 'Now'" in which he claims to have discovered a reliable method of ascertaining authorship of plays attributed to Marlowe: "Marlowe's tendency to use this word ["now"] is so unbelievably pronounced as to constitute at times a serious defect in his poetical style."[80] He contends that while Marlowe's contemporaries and imitators

> occasionally were guilty of the same mannerism,... Marlowe has a percentage of lines beginning with "now" vastly greater than any of the others, a vastly greater percentage of sentences beginning with

[79] Friedman, pp. 155-56.

[80] George Coffin Taylor, "Marlowe's Now," in Elizabethan Studies and Other Essays in Honour of F. Reynolds, University of Colorado Studies, Series B: Studies in the Humanities, Vol. II, No. 4 (Boulder: Univ. of Colorado Press, 1945), 93.

> "now," a vastly greater number of long speeches by principal characters with the opening word "now" and very many more characters addressed with the opening word "now."[81]

He substantiates this claim by giving the results of a study he has undertaken:

> Looking for "now's" beginning a line in Peele is like looking for a needle in a haystack. There are about forty "now's" in twelve thousand lines of Peele, about forty in twelve hundred lines of Marlowe. Thomas Heywood's plays are almost as scarce.... There are approximately seventy-three "now's" in the whole body of plays assigned by Boas to Kyd.[82]

He offers an interesting account of how the word "now" is used in the plays, including the information that,

> An amazing number of them constitute the first of a long or short speech by the most important character or characters in the play. Occasionally "now" is the very first word of an act or scene.... Occasionally one is shocked by some three lines of a speech of eight lines beginning with "now," as ... in The Jew of Malta, four lines beginning with "now" from lines 659-670, and three out of four lines, beginning with "now" from 951-954,[83]

quoting the lines mentioned, in full, to illustrate his point.[84]

The conclusion Taylor draws from his study is that,

> So characteristic is this usage [the word "now" used to begin lines] that one is tempted to conclude that when a great number of lines in any play attributed

[81] Taylor, pp. 93-94.

[82] Ibid., p. 99.

[83] Ibid., p. 97.

[84] The lines from the play quoted by Taylor correspond to II.i.20-23 and III.ii.6-10 in the Penguin Edition of The Jew of Malta edited by J.B. Steane.

> by anyone to Marlowe is not characterized by this idiosyncrasy, it is to be suspected of not being Marlovian.[85]

Taylor gives the line number of each line of The Jew of Malta which contains the word "now," and he states that there is a total of sixty-five "now's" in the play.[86]

Perhaps the most significant discovery Taylor has made is that "Acts II and IV of The Jew of Malta, attributed by some to Heywood, run high in "now's" whereas Heywood's own plays run so low in this peculiarity as to be negligible."[87]

However convincing Taylor's discoveries may be, it is still not possible to accept such word counts, particularly of a single and isolated word, as irrefutable proof that Marlowe wrote the entire play. Taylor himself points out:

> Perhaps the most fascinating, if puzzling, aspect of the matter is whether the frequency of the occurence of this "now" is due to Marlowe's extreme haste in writing, his unconscious carelessness in the use of it, or whether it is due in part to the actor, Alleyn, being responsible for it. He may possibly have caught the trick from Marlowe and introduced it into lines in which Marlowe never wrote it.[88]

The last hypothesis is unlikely, one could argue, because if Alleyn was responsible for it, the other plays in which he acted would dis-

[85] Taylor, p. 99.

[86] Ibid., p. 98.

[87] Ibid., p. 98.

[88] Ibid., p. 100.

play the the same characteristic.[89] One could also argue that there seems to be no reason to suppose that Alleyn would have added "now's" and that Taylor himself does not think it very likely. However, the fact remains that it is possible that Alleyn—or someone else—could have added "now's" to the play.

Harry Levin perhaps best summarizes conclusions which can be drawn from the study of the authorship dispute. While he agrees that "criticism is warranted in stressing the disproportion between the two halves of the play,"[90] he asserts that "It seems wiser ... to accept The Jew of Malta as an artistic whole, noting its incongruities and tensions, than to take the easy course of ruling them out as interpolations by a later hand."[91] He contends that "the very essence of Marlowe's art, to sum it up with a Baconian phrase, is 'strangenesse in the proportions.'"[92]

As Ribner writes, "the play has never been satisfactorily solved"[93] on the question of Marlowe's having written the entire play alone, but it is obvious from the examples offered in this chapter, that the best substantiated and most convincing arguments of the debate are those which maintain that the play fulfills Marlowe's origin-

[89] As far as I have been able to determine, no writer has undertaken to explore this possibility in the other Alleyn plays. While such an investigation is beyond the scope of this study, it would help to substantiate (or discredit) Taylor's hypothesis.

[90] Levin, The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe, p. 96.

[91] Ibid., p. 96.

[92] Ibid., p. 96.

[93] Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" p. 101.

al intentions and he had at the very least a hand in the actual writing of the last acts. The next chapters explore various interpretations of the play which have been offered over the years, and the fact that the play can be satisfactorily explained and understood as a unified whole with a definite purpose and/or message, is perhaps the best evidence that Marlowe is responsible for the entire play—or that the collaboration is coherent enough to permit a plausible integration of the whole.

SECTION III

THE CHARACTER OF BARABAS

INTRODUCTION

Of Barabas, Irving Ribner has written "unless we understand him we can have no understanding of the play."[1] Certainly Barabas' importance in the play can scarcely be overestimated. Like other Marlovian protagonists, Barabas dominates the play, and the plot develops as a result of his actions and reactions. Predictably, Barabas has been the topic of a large body of literary criticism over the years. This body of criticism can be profitably divided into six major groups, which would include: (1) criticism which perceives Barabas as a monster; (2) criticism which focuses on his Jewishness; (3) criticism which perceives him primarily as a "passionate yearner"; (4) that which views him as an overreacher; (5) that which sees him as an underreacher; and (6) that which considers him primarily as a Machiavellian, or a pseudo-Machiavellian.

[1] Ribner, "Preface," The Jew of Malta: Text and Major Criticism, p. ix.

CHAPTER SIX

BARABAS THE MONSTER

Bullen, J. Scott Clark, Corson, Crofts, Dyce, Ellis-Fermor, Ervine, Hallam, Lamb, Lowell, Luce, Meehan, Minto, Nicoll, Odell, Seccombe, Sharpe, Smith, Steane, Taine, Turner, Woodberry[1]

The perception of Barabas as a monster has been a common characteristic of a substantial body of Jew of Malta criticism. Alan Warren Friedman has listed the names and works of fourteen critics who, he says, "to various degrees ... monsterize Barabas," and he insists that "many more could be included" in the record.[1]

The body of criticism which tends to "monsterize" Barabas can be seen to fall into two sub-categories: (A) criticism which sees Barabas simply and entirely as a monster; and (B) criticism which sees Barabas as a noble or tragic or heroic figure who deteriorates into a monster as the play progresses. There are two divisions in the second subgroup, one which ascribes the result of Barabas' decline to Marlowe's inability to portray human beings realistically in his plays, and/or to Marlowe's desire to please the crowds at the expense of the play's artistic integrity by creating a ridiculously monstrous character; and one which sees Barabas' deterioration as integral to the playwright's artistic and philosophical objectives in the play, and thus as a deter-

[1] Friedman, p. 155.

mined part of Marlowe's plan.

Charles Lamb is perhaps the critic most responsible for sparking the flurry of writing about Barabas as a monster. In 1808, he offered a comparison of Shylock and Barabas in which he termed Barabas a "mere monster":

> Marlowe's Jew does not approach so near to Shakespeare's as his Edward II does to Richard II. Shylock, in the midst of his savage purpose, is a man. His motives, feelings, resentments have something human in them.... Barabas is a mere monster, brought in with a large painted nose, to please the rabble. He kills in sport, poisons whole nunneries, invents infernal machines.[2]

As we saw in Chapter Two, Welsh, Mabie, Crawshaw, Neilson and Thorndike agreed with Lamb's estimation of Barabas.[3] Many other critics echoed his sentiments, some his exact words. "Mere monster" became [illegible] words in Jew of Malta criticism.

The anonymous author of an article in Blackwood's Magazine pronounces Barabas a "Demon" whose "wickedness is ... grotesque and boundless" and whose "only purely human feeling ... is his paternal affection,"[4] which he soon loses. He writes: "But the moment Abigail ... abandons her Creed, he tears her from his soul with loathing and abhorrence...."[5] William Minto insists that Barabas is "an incarnation of the Devil himself" because

[2] Charles Lamb, "Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets, 1808," The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, ed. E.V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1905), IV, 26.

[3] See above, pp. 15, 16, 29, 38 and 39.

[4] H.M., "On The Jew of Malta," Blackwood's Magazine, 2 (Dec. 1817), 266.

[5] Ibid., p. 266.

> he is no less universal in his war against all mankind that are within reach of his power: he fights single-handed with monstrous instruments of death against a whole city, and does not scruple to poison even his own daughter.[6]

While Minto writes that "we have no right to identify a dramatist with his characters,"[7] he proceeds to do just that in suggesting that Marlowe's main characters, including the monstrous Barabas, are not the products of a calm mind. He asserts that,

> it is impossible to disregard the combined evidences of his dramatic conceptions and the accusations brought against him by more respectable contemporaries. His chief characters, Tamburlaine, Faustus and the Jew of Malta, are not the creations of a calm mind: their volcanic passions and daring scepticism are the offspring of a turbulent, vehement, irregular nature....[8]

In their study of the general characteristics of Marlowe's writing, J. Scott Clark and John Prince Odell list, as one such characteristic, "Portrayal of Horror and Fiendishness"[9] and they offer the character Barabas as an example of this distinguishing feature, citing Minto's remarks about Barabas as an incarnation of the Devil, and providing as an illustration Barabas' words to Ithamore concerning the poison he (Barabas) wants given to Abigail.

All that H. Corson has to say of The Jew of Malta concerns the monstrous character of Barabas: "Tamburlaine and the Jew of Malta are monsters, in their several ways; and much of what they are made

[6] William Minto, Characteristics of English Poets. 2nd ed. (1874; rpt. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1885), p. 237.

[7] Ibid., p. 232.

[8] Ibid., pp. 232-23.

[9] J. Scott Clark and John Prince Odell, A Study of English and American Writers (1916; rpt. New York: Ams Press Inc., 1974), pp. 36-37.

to say 'o'ersteps the modesty of nature.'"[10] Robert Sharpe attributes Barabas' bloodthirstiness to his medieval origins and claims that Barabas is a villainous "Senecan type."[11] He writes: "Marlowe gives Barabas a bloodthirstiness which comes from ... medieval legends ... and adds an indefinable grandeur of character which is achieved by no other example of the [stock] type excepting only Shylock."[12] Alexander Dyce proclaims that "The character of Barabas ... is delineated with no ordinary power, and possesses a strong individuality," but adds: "it is a good deal overcharged," in that it attributes "almost impossible wickedness"[13] to Barabas. J.R. Lowell insists that "There are ... no characters in the plays of Marlowe—but personages and interlocutors," and he writes that "The nearest approach to a character is Barabas ... and he is but the incarnation of the popular hatred of the Jew. There is really nothing human in him. He seems a bugaboo rather than a man."[14] Charles Edward Turner's opinion is similar in that he perceives Barabas as "a wild monster such as never could exist."[15]

As previously demonstrated, many writers (including Turner, Hallam, Bullen, the anonymous author of an article in Fraser's

[10] H. Corson, A Primer of English Verse (Boston: J.S. Cushing & Co., 1892), p. 190.

[11] Robert Boies Sharpe, The Real War of the Theatres (1935; rpt. New York: Krause Reprint Corporation, 1966), p. 86.

[12] Ibid., p. 86.

[13] Dyce, p. xxi.

[14] Lowell, p. 217.

[15] Turner, p. 218.

Magazine, Smith, Luce, Woodberry, Crofts and Ellis-Fermor[16]) perceive a breaking off, or degeneration, in the play's quality after the first two acts. According to the above critics, this degeneration is mainly due to the deterioration of Barabas' character. They perceive Barabas as a noble and heroic figure whose character deteriorates drastically as the play progresses and they believe variously that the retrogression was at once unintentional and inevitable (i.e., that Marlowe's powers of characterization were weak and that he was unable to portray life-like characters in his plays), or that Marlowe intentionally created a ridiculous monster to please the buffoonery-loving crowds. The work of these writers thus constitutes the first division of the second sub-group of criticism which monsterizes Barabas. The anonymous author of an 1853 Fraser's Magazine essay, for example, claims that Barabas is "drawn ... with great truth, and even delicacy, in the first part of the play," but

> Barabas becomes a mere monster, exulting in crime for its own sake in the most impossible way ... proclaiming himself to be nothing more or less than an utter and irredeemable Bogy.[17]

Other critics have written that Barabas started out as a noble figure but quickly became a monster. H.A. Taine states: "Barabas ... maddened with hate, is thenceforth no longer human; he has been treated by the Christians like a beast, and he hates them like a beast."[18] W.R. Nicoll and T. Seccombe assert that "the early scenes

[16] See above, pp. 45-50, 52-53 and 57-58.

[17] "Christopher Marlowe," Fraser's Magazine, 47 (Feb. 1853), 232-33.

[18] H.A. Taine, A History of English Literature, trans. H. Van Laun, 3 vols. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1877), I, 273.

... are as fine as anything Marlowe ever wrote. But the cumulation of horrors and the exaggeration of the Jew's character, in which the semblance of humanity is sacrificed for the ravings of a devil incarnate, tend gradually to neutralise the human interest of the play."[19] S.J. Ervine also notes that: "Barabas divested himself of all resemblance to a human being and became merely a monster...."[20]

Some writers believe that the deterioration of Barabas' character after the first part of the play was not due to Marlowe's deficiency in portraying character. These critics contend that Marlowe deliberately determined the character of Barabas. They insist that Marlowe intended Barabas to be a noble-cum-villain figure, and that his purpose in so doing was more than merely to please the crowds. The work of these writers constitutes the second division of the second subgroup of criticism which tends to monsterize Barabas: i.e., that which believes that the change in Barabas' character in the second part of the play was part of Marlowe's "message" to his audience. Virginia Mary Meehan, for example, writes that although "the poet in the beginning works some sympathy for Barabas," nevertheless "it is plain that he never intended his hero to be anything but a villain."[21]

J.B. Steane also perceives a difference in Barabas' character in the play's second part, and he sees this change as constituting Barabas' move from man to monster, but he does not find this surpris-

[19] W.R. Nicoll and T. Seccombe, A History of English Literature (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1907), p. 166.

[20] Ervine, p. 110.

[21] Virginia Mary Meehan, Christopher Marlowe: Poet and Playwright (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p. 68.

ing, nor does he consider it a weakness in the play but rather a continuing part of the story. According to Steane, after Abigail has thrown Barabas the money-bags, "Barabas has already moved into the realm of caricature, and it is not surprising that when we see him next he has progressed a stage further towards the monster-man."[22] He asserts that, with the purchase of Ithamore,

> we have now seen all we are going to see of Barabas as [a tragic figure]. ... What follows ... is a culmination [which] has been in sight from the first.... The essential unity of the play seems plain, and the point is laboured here only because it has been so often denied.[23]

Steane's theory, which is explored in further detail in Chapter Thirteen (pp. 176-77) is that the play is concerned with the debasement of humanity, and, as such, the "deterioration" of Barabas' character is crucial to the play's purpose.

[22] J.B. Steane, Marlowe: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964), p. 184.

[23] Ibid., p. 186.

Ward also points out that while Barabas "cannot be called in any sense a study of the Jewish nature, mind, or character," he "was conceived in so resolute a spirit of Anti-Semitism as to call forth a whole line of successors."[22] However, in the next few lines Ward contradicts his own comments about Barabas' conception in a spirit of anti-Semitism, by insisting that Marlowe was innocent of any deliberate anti-Semitic intentions: "To Marlowe's mind a Jew was fair game, his diabolical hatred of everything Christian a matter of course, and his love of money an axiom. He was wholly innocent of any design of producing a typical study of Judaism."[23] If Ward's point is that Marlowe did not intend Barabas to be a typical Jew but just one very bad example that the Elizabethans mistakenly interpreted as representative of "the typical Jew," Ward has not only made a very poor job of communicating his idea, but the theory itself assumes a naiveté Marlowe was hardly likely to have possessed. It is unlikely that Marlowe would not have foreseen that the Elizabethan audiences would perceive Barabas as a "typical Jew," because Marlowe's Jew, as we have seen, fit the public, stereotyped notion of Jews at the time. As Arnold Harris Mathew and W.A. Sutton write: "the hero, Barabas, is a typical Jew, as medieval writers were accustomed to picture him."[24]

Like Ward, Richard W. Van Fossen believes "that the typical

[22] Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature, pp. 344-45.

[23] Ibid., p. 345.

[24] Arnold Harris Mathew and W.A. Sutton, Catholic Scholars' Introduction to English Literature (New York: Benziger Bros., 1904), p. 80.

Elizabethan was unlikely to know very many Jews" and he shares Ward's conviction that "any considerable amount of real anti-Jewish feeling is improbable...."[25] He does admit that "The Jews were blamed for the Crucifixion," and, like Mathew, that "by a long mediaeval tradition were associated with the Devil and the comic Vice character on the stage," but nevertheless he believes: "the prevailing attitude toward them was probably one of fascination and wonder"; concluding: "the portrait of Barabas is not—and cannot be—anti-Semitic in the way that a similar portrait would be in the work of a twentieth century writer."[26]

A second sub-group of critics is concerned with denouncing the supposedly Jewish characteristics Marlowe attributes to Barabas in the play. These writers emphasize that Marlowe misrepresented the Jewish people in his creation of Barabas. They insist that because of his misrepresentation of a people, Marlowe—either intentionally or unintentionally—contributed significantly to the growth and perpetuation of anti-Semitic sentiments.

E.N. Calish laments: "it is a thousand pities that he [Marlowe] should have given over [his talent] to the tragic misrepresentation of a people."[27] He writes that "Barabas ... is an atrocious villain, a monster of wickedness," and notes that "the name Barabas, the thief whose life was saved in preference to that of

[25] Van Fossen, p. xvi.

[26] Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

[27] Edward Nathaniel Calish, The Jew in English Literature (1909; rpt. New York: Kennikat Press, 1969), p. 62.

Jesus, was chosen to make him the more hateful."[28] According to Calish, Marlowe touches the truth about Jews in one or two places: "Barabas' love for his daughter ..., his one redeeming quality, is Jewish. The family ties among the Jews have always been strong and pure ..." and

> He is also correct when he makes Barabas declare that men of judgment should hold their wealth "in little room" (Act I, Sc. i). This was a policy forced upon the Jews by the exigencies of their life.... they [were] compelled to have their wealth in portable shape as far as possible, so that when fleeing, they should not be utterly bereft.[29]

Calish insists that,

> The other incidents of the play as pictures of Jewish life or character are false, all false. No Jew would ever employ his child as Barabas did Abigail, to lure two lovers on to their deaths. Nor would a Jew have had the inhumanity to poison a houseful of human beings.[30]

While Calish is certainly correct in that these acts of Barabas were and are not typically Jewish acts, his words "No Jew would ever" are somewhat too all-embracing. Criminals and mentally disturbed people are universal. Calish notes that "The play was extremely popular. Its cruelty, its coarseness, its vulgar horrors suited the age." He concludes that the play

> is a classic, but one of unjustice and untruth. It was a picture of the popular conception of the Jews, as it existed in Marlowe's day. It was an untrue conception, begotten of ignorance and prejudice and Marlowe helped, all unhappily too well, to

[28] Calish, pp. 62 and 65.

[29] Ibid., p. 63.

[30] Ibid., p. 64.

> strengthen and perpetuate them. [Presumably, "them" refers to ignorance and prejudice.][31]

Harry Levi, M.J. Landa and Hyman Enelow belong to the same school of thought as Calish, in that they take particular exception to Marlowe's portrayal of Barabas as a Jew and insist that there is almost nothing truly Jewish about Barabas. Levi writes that the Jew in fiction is typically

> a caricature, and yet not a surprise. For however much writers impress their personality on their work and the people of their day, they still voice and interpret national consciousness.... The Jew found in literature generally the same recognition he received in life. Which explains why the Jew in fiction is almost without exception an unattractive figure.[32]

Unlike Ward, Levi does not hold Marlowe responsible for the creation of the stage-Jew stereotype. His opinion that "already before the time of Marlowe, the Jew had made his appearance in the Mystery and Miracle plays. He was also frequently referred to in the early English ballads, especially in connection with the ritual murder charge," accords with the beliefs of Mathew and Van Fossen, and Levi notes that in spite of Tudor Jenks' assertion that Chaucer was "broad-minded and unprejudiced," Chaucer's "representative Jew cannot rise above the killing of Christian children either for ritual purposes, or out of hatred."[33]

Levi maintains that Marlowe

> bowed to the will of the motley crowds that thronged the theatres.... They disliked the Jew and delighted

[31] Calish, pp. 65-66.

[32] Levi, pp. 5 and 6.

[33] Ibid., p. 6.

> to see him caricatured, and lo and behold, the caricature stalked upon the boards. They believed the Jew to be the embodiment of every vice, wanting in every virtue, and forthwith, the belief was given dramatic expression.[34]

This opinion accords with that of Hawkins, Morley and Mortland. But, like Calish, Levi insists: "There is absolutely nothing Jewish about Barabas."[35] He admits that "Marlowe may have met some ... Jews," but he makes the valid point that "their number was so small, and the few who remained [in England] permanently so had to disguise their religious identity, that even if he met them he would not really have known them."[36] He continues: "And while to know is not necessarily to love, prejudice is largely due to ignorance."[37] The truth of the latter statement, of course, cannot be denied, but the inherent implication that Marlowe's portrayal of Barabas indicates that Marlowe was prejudiced against the Jewish people is not necessarily true. That a dramatist would depict on stage the popular, though prejudiced notion of the Jew, does not necessarily mean that the dramatist shares his audience's beliefs. He may have had some greater purpose in mind when he chose to present the character on stage. Levi apparently has not considered such a possibility. Noting that,

> Little as Marlowe could have known of the contemporary Jew of his own country, he must have known less of the Jew of Malta. When the Jew first set foot on Maltese soil, if he ever went there at all in the early days, it is impossible to say. Jewish history and literature are absolutely silent on the subject,

[34] Levi, p. 12.

[35] Ibid., p. 17.

[36] Ibid., p. 12.

[37] Ibid., p. 12.

Levi concludes that Marlowe "must have known practically nothing of the Jews of Malta. That is why Barabas is so untrue and so impossible."[38] Levi may, of course, be right in hypothesizing that Marlowe knew little of Jews and practically nothing of the Maltese Jews. However, his conclusion that Marlowe's ignorance is the reason that "Barabas is so untrue and so impossible" is not necessarily correct. This conclusion is based on the assumption that it was Marlowe's purpose and intention to have Barabas represent a real Jew as Marlowe perceived real Jews—i.e., that Marlowe was saying, "this is what the Jew is like." This assumption, of course, is not innately true: it may not have been Marlowe's purpose to present his own perception of the Jewish people at all. It follows, therefore, that there may be other reasons that "Barabas is so untrue and so impossible." For example, perhaps Marlowe was holding up the stereotype to point out how ridiculous it is to believe that any person could be so gratuitously wicked, or perhaps he intended to demonstrate that excessive greed and an obsessive desire for revenge can lead to disastrous and de-humanizing consequences.

Levi also states that "Marlowe means to suggest that usury was a Jewish occupation, when, in fact, both Jews and Christians engaged in it."[39] He mentions Israel Abrahams' observation in Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, that money-lending was absolutely the only profession open to the Jews.[40] While Christians as well as Jews did engage

[38] Levi, pp. 12 and 14.

[39] Ibid., p. 16.

[40] Ibid., p. 16.

in usury, Levi's claim that Marlowe meant to suggest that only Jews practised usury is not necessarily true. We do not know for a fact that Marlowe "meant to suggest" anything of the kind, and, indeed, Levi offers no substantiating evidence, nor details of any sort to support his statement. Levi sees Marlowe as an atheist and an immoral person. To Levi, Marlowe was "careless of tradition and convention, indifferent to public opinion, running the whole gamut of vicious dissipation ... he was as indifferent to religion as he was to morality," and he was boastful of his atheism.[41] After having considered Levi's other comments about Marlowe and the play, one can only conclude from these last remarks that Levi has fallen into the trap, like the early Marlowe critics, of confusing Marlowe the dramatist with Marlowe the man. He perceives that Barabas accurately reflects Marlowe's personal attitude towards Jews. Levi hopes to discredit Marlowe's portrayal of Barabas by demonstrating that Marlowe was an immoral person whose views are not to be respected.

Like Levi, M.J. Landa has formed a negative opinion of Marlowe's character. He writes:

> Marlowe's aggressive atheism and active revolt vented itself on the People of the Book.... All the heroes in his plays are heathens, or infidels. He lost no opportunity to insinuate a skeptical view, to defy authority, to give fullest rein to the reckless disbelief that animated his turbid spirit, in which, nevertheless, the true flame of genius leaped ever lurid.[42]

Landa also believes that Marlowe's knowledge of the Jewish people

[41] Levi, p. 10.

[42] M.J. Landa, "Marlowe's Jew of Malta," The Jew in Drama (1926; rpt. New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969), p. 57.

was non-existent. He writes that "Marlowe betrays complete ignorance of Jews and Judaism. He knows nothing beyond the treatment dictated by ferocious medievalism," and Landa gives examples from the play to illustrate his point:

> Barabas—a name purposely selected to excite malice—uses Pagan oaths, swearing by "Corpo de Dio" and offering a prayer to the great "Primus Motor" (Act I). [The] Latin quotations and the following reference to his daughter in the same act are further preposterous phrases to put in the mouth of a Jew: "... one sole daughter, whom I hold as dear/As Agamemnon did his Iphigen."[43]

He claims that the reference to Barabas in the Prologue as "a Jew whose money was not got without my means" is indicative of "the dramatist's provocative intent. His motive was to depict the Jew as the super-monster. Barabas is without the slightest glimmer of a redeeming virtue."[44]

To emphasize his point that the characteristics attributed by Marlowe to Barabas are not truly Jewish traits, Landa refers to Barabas' words to Abigail that "'Tis no sin to deceive a Christian" (Act II) and explains in detailed length that,

> It needs to be made clear at once that this is quite contrary to the tenets of Judaism.... In the Middle Ages the Jewish attitude towards non-Jews was explicitly laid down. Maimonides (1135-1204), the codifier of traditional Judaism, wrote: "It is forbidden to defraud or to deceive any person in business, Jew and non-Jew are to be treated alike." (Yad Mekirah, xviii.I).[45]

Landa asserts that,

> The words of Barabas to his daughter no doubt expressed

[43] Landa, pp. 60-61.

[44] Ibid., p. 61.

[45] Ibid., p. 62.

> a common Christian belief of the time, for the same misconception still exists, but the scorn of the Christian in respect of this alleged feeling comes with bad grace from those who have always discriminated against the Jew.[46]

He points out that it was the "Christian custom of the Middle Ages" to confiscate "Jewish wealth," and that "the pages of history are closely inscribed with the record of spoliation ... of the Jew, backed up, in most instances by the direct ordinances and blessings of the Church."[47] Landa's argument is inconsistent. He first maintains that Marlowe has Barabas pronounce sentiments that are contrary to Jewish law and therefore not characteristically Jewish, but he then seems to support the very sentiment he insists is not in accordance with Judaism, by implying that Barabas should be forgiven his "sinister advice"[48] to his daughter because the Christians have treated the Jews so poorly over the years. Landa should decide whether Barabas is or is not a Jew. If he is a Jew, then Landa is within his right in pointing out errors in attitudes which are not Jewish—but he should not insist that Barabas should be forgiven these attitudes anyway. If Barabas is not a Jew, but just an egregiously bad villain, then to determine that Marlowe should have defended the position of European Jews is clearly beyond the demands upon a dramatist who only wants to depict a blackguard for general entertainment.

Landa writes that "the first two acts reveal the hand of a

[46] Landa, p. 63.

[47] Ibid., p. 63.

[48] Ibid., p. 63.

master" in the play, and he is bitterly disappointed that Marlowe "let Barabas and Ithamore run riot with his imagination" in the last part, effectively ruining the play.[49] The following strongly-worded passage reveals Landa's bitterness towards Marlowe:

> The world has long since passed judgment upon the play as a masterpiece of inhuman horror that never had its counterpart in life. Existence was a vile thing to the disordered imagination of Marlowe, who delved into the lowest dregs of his mind, revelled there like a pariah dog in a shambles, without pausing to deliberate for a moment upon probabilities, unhampered by pricks of conscience.[50]

According to Landa, Marlowe failed as a dramatist and the play has survived only because of "the grandeur of some of its lines."[51] He writes:

> Marlowe lacked the power of characterization and of endowing his people with life, and without these qualifications the dramatist must fail. Anyone can create a monster: the child that draws its first face on the pavement, or on a slate, does so by giving two eyes to a profile. Were it not for the grandeur of some of its lines, Marlowe's play would have been laughed out of existence.[52]

It is, of course, unlikely that the play would have been laughed "out of existence": it was popular in Marlowe's time, and it is reasonable to assume that its popularity was due, in part, to the laughable and the horrific aspects of the play. Landa, in fact, does note that "the play was extremely popular" but he adds that, "That fact speaks volumes in revelation of the depraved state of the people who had not

[49] Landa, p. 66.

[50] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[51] Ibid., p. 66.

[52] Ibid., p. 66.

yet come under the influence of England's Golden Age."[53] Landa seems unaware that this remark contradicts his previous comment, which implies that only Marlowe's great lines were responsible for the success of the play. Landa continues: "His popularity and influence notwithstanding, Barabas could not outlive his day. There have been only two revivals of the play,"[54] but it should be noted that this statement was written half a century ago and there undoubtedly have been a number of revivals since then. Landa lists the 1818 Edmund Kean revival and the Phoenix Society performances in November 1922, commenting that, during the 1922 productions, "Both actors and audience treated the play more as a burlesque than anything else."[55] Evidently, it has not occurred to Landa that perhaps Marlowe intended the play to be more "a burlesque than anything else."

While one can sympathize with Calish, Levi and Landa in their personal distress concerning what they perceive to be an inexcusable defamation of Jewish character, one wonders whether their acute feelings of having been irredeemably wronged, have impeded their ability to analyze and criticize the play objectively. In fact, their interest in the play resides not in the play's artistic merits or faults, but in its sociological shortcomings.

One is saddened, too, to realize that these twentieth-century writers should have felt compelled to explain that Barabas did not typify the Jew. It should have been unnecessary to point out that

[53] Landa, p. 67.

[54] Ibid., p. 68.

[55] Ibid., p. 68.

while the figure of Barabas may have represented the popular conception of the Jew during Marlowe's time, it is inaccurate to maintain that the Jewish people were or are actually like Barabas. Surely it is a grievous reminder of the ignorance and intolerance (which still characterize sections of twentieth century society), which caused these scholars to believe there was a need to explain that to be Jewish is not to be a Barabas.

Because of the sociological issue suggested by the play, The Jew of Malta has conjured up numerous such extra-literary assessments.

Hyman Enelow's comments about the play are more insightful and less painfully emotional, and his work belongs to a third sub-group of criticism which attempts to explain Marlowe's purposes in portraying Barabas as an inhuman Jew. Like Levi, Calish and Landa, Enelow asserts that there is nothing truly Jewish about Barabas. He points out that the history of the Jews has been "the very essence of tolerance and the pinnacle of liberalism" in comparison to the history of other peoples, which includes such events as the wars for Mohametanism in Asia and Europe, the Christian religious wars and the Inquisition; and he maintains that the Jew is the "most compassionate of beings"[56] as a result of his persecution and agonies. He notes that "Barabas in the course of the play ceases to be a Jew and becomes a monster ... he does things that no Jew has ever done under similar circumstances, certainly not the typical, the historical

[56] Hyman G. Enelow, "The Jew of Malta," Selected Works of Hyman G. Enelow (Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1935), II, 202.

Jew"[57] who suffered similarly to Barabas but sought no revenge. His words "no Jew" may, like those of Calish, be slightly too all-encompassing, and, up to this point, his comments echo those of Levi, Calish and Landa. However, unlike the others, Enelow believes that Marlowe's purpose in writing the play was not merely to satisfy the popular demand in entertainment by producing an outrageously inhumane stage-Jew. According to Enelow, "the first two acts ... show plainly that Marlowe felt the injustice that was heaped by the world on the Jew," and he goes on to say that Marlowe, in The Jew of Malta, demonstrates these injustices by showing that the Jews were required to pay the administration even though they had no rights under the law, that despotism wore the mask of religious dogma, and that it is wrong to assume that all Jews are rich and alike.[58] He writes that "not only [is] a caricature of the Jew" exhibited in the play,

> but also a biting criticism of the non-Jew. In fact, you can perceive throughout a criticism of the men and the manners of the time, more especially of the wrongs and crimes perpetuated by both in the name of both the Church and the State.[59]

Enelow thus perceives the play as a morality, claiming that

> it is ... hypocrisy that he [Marlowe] assails in his drama: robberies committed under the mask of religious belief; the perversions ... lust and ... avarice of the contemporary clergy; the reciprocal hate of the followers of the three different great religions, which to him were all alike hateful.[60]

[57] Enelow, p. 203.

[58] Ibid., pp. 206-07.

[59] Ibid., pp. 204 and 202.

[60] Ibid., p. 204.

He concludes that Barabas' role in this morality is significant, as Marlowe "used Barabas for the working out of the theme to the taste of his audience," and Marlowe "really ... expos[ed] the injustice and the hypocrisy of the world in its treatment of the Jew."[61] Unlike the latter three writers, Enelow believes that Marlowe aimed to expose the world's unjust treatment of the Jew, rather than to add to it.

Irving Ribner states that "the play is blatantly anti-Semitic,"[62] but he suggests that Marlowe's purpose in presenting anti-Semitic sentiments may have been more than merely an attempt to please the audience. He warns, however,

> if we limit our consideration to those parts of the play which are manifestly Marlowe's, it is at least as anti-Christian as it is anti-Semitic, and on moral grounds Barabas certainly gets the better of his quarrel with Ferneze in the first act.... The behaviour of the Christians in the play merits the contempt with which Barabas views them.[63]

Harry Levin, in his article "Marlowe Today," maintains that the play is "more anti-Christian than anti-Semitic," pointing out that "Here again it is the Christians who do the oathbreaking, and their Governor outdoes the Jew in Machiavellian blackmail and double-dealing."[64]

The gradual realization that Marlowe's purpose in caricaturing Barabas in his play may have been more than merely an attempt to

[61] Enelow, p. 205.

[62] Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" p. 101.

[63] Ibid., pp. 101-02.

[64] Harry Levin, "Marlowe Today," Tulane Drama Review, 8, 4 (1964), 29.

draw crowds, is perhaps the most significant contribution of the body of criticism concerning Barabas as a Jew, because it focused attention on Barabas and ultimately encouraged a closer examination of the character and of the play in which he appears. The following chapters will testify to this closer study of Barabas and the play.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BARABAS THE PASSIONATE YEARNER

Blair, Boas, Collins, Corbin, Crawshaw, Dowden, Edmunds, Fansler, Greenlaw, Halleck, Hamilton, Hastings, Hennessey, Houston, Ingram, Lewis, Long, Neilson, Pace, Phelps, Semper, Symonds, Thorndike, Wendell, Whipple, Williams, F.P. Wilson, N.S. Wilson, Woodberry

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, a group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century critics identified passion or longing as a dominant theme in the play. It was variously labelled as longing for the unattainable (Symonds, Wendell); longing for the unlimited or boundless (Houston, Greenlaw, Semper); exaggerated ambition (Pace); or a strong, overruling passion (Lewis, Crawshaw, Neilson and Thorndike).[1] The main interest of these critics remains, not in the character of the hero *per se*, but rather in the theme or themes he represented. Nevertheless, a portrait of the hero—painted with increasing detail as attention to textual analysis expanded—clearly developed. And the portrait, as would be expected, was virtually a personification of theme. Accordingly, the protagonist of *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas, is perceived by critics concerned with the themes of passion and longing in the play, as a passionate yearner. There exist

[1] See above, pp. 34-39.

four main categories of thought about the nature of the passionate yearner Barabas represents. One sub-group perceives Barabas as a study of the yearning for wealth. A second sub-group maintains that, while the object of the desire is undoubtedly wealth, yearning itself is the main issue, and that the object of the longing is only of secondary importance. Other critics claim that Barabas is a study of passion itself, and that the nature of the passion (i.e., the passion of extreme yearning, or greed, or ambition, or anger, etc.) is secondary, forming a third sub-group. A fourth sub-group asserts that Barabas is a study in the lust or desire—not for wealth for its own sake—but for the power wealth can provide: that is, Barabas is a study of the yearning for power.

Among writers concerned about passion or longing as a theme of the play, by far the majority belong to the sub-group which perceives Barabas as a study in the yearning for wealth. Like Greenlaw, Houston, Pace and Semper, John Corbin, for example, believes that "Barabas the Jew personifies the greed for gold,"[2] and William Joseph Long asserts that the play is "a study of the lust for wealth."[3] C. Hastings writes that the play "is remarkable for the powerful character of Barabas, the avaricious Jew" who is, Hastings claims, not a true-to-life character, "not the fruit of study and observation," as "Marlowe's characters.... are pure ideal conceptions put into drama."[4]

[2] John Corbin, The Elizabethan Hamlet (1895; rpt. New York: Ams Press Inc., 1970), p. 53.

[3] William Joseph Long, Outlines of English Literature (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1925), p. 135.

[4] C. Hastings, The Theatre (London: Duckworth and Co., 1901), p. 214.

E.W. Edmunds sees Barabas as "a study of avarice on the large scale which suited Marlowe's gifts."[5] To Edmunds, the play is "a study of the lust for wealth," and he points out that "this in itself is an ugly and loathsome [sic] passion, but still human. Given a man in whom this lust is grown to monstrous size, ... is thwarted.... [and] Barabas becomes inhuman"; but, he continues, "this was surely Marlowe's intention."[6] Edmunds believes that "Barabas would have continued to live a placid and human life if the powers of Malta had not robbed him of the one thing which made his life tolerable. They take this from him, and he falls ... into the grip of a new lust—the savage hunger for revenge."[7]

Like Symonds, P.K. Hennessey considers the play a study in "L'amour de l'Impossible."[8] He believes that Barabas represents a desire for wealth and his claim that Barabas' avarice is above petty reproach, as it is on a great "Napoleonic"[9] scale, echoes the heroic soundings of Edmunds.

Reuben Post Halleck's mention of the play in his anthology entitled Halleck's New English Literature, consists of the somewhat verbose comment that the play "is the incarnation of the passion for the world's wealth, a passion that towers above common greed only by

[5] Edmunds, p. 172.

[6] Ibid., pp. 179-80.

[7] Ibid., p. 180.

[8] P.K. Hennessey, "The Tragedies of Christopher Marlowe," The University of Virginia Magazine, 86 (Mar. 1926), 172.

[9] Ibid., p. 172.

the magnificence of its immensity."[10] Harriott Fansler writes that Barabas "is the embodiment of the lust of ... gold and vengeance," and Fansler insists that Marlowe's main characters, including Barabas, "are interesting personalities in themselves, regardless of what they specifically do. They are interesting rather for what they want to do."[11] According to Fansler, Marlowe

> transmuted the abstract wish of a bloodless ghost into a life principle of a militant personality. ... Marlowe's protagonists live and breathe only in their desires. Such emphasis easily results in caricature, as it resulted in Marlowe's own Merchant Jew,

and it was Marlowe's purpose to embody "in a typical personality an ardent passion."[12]

Clayton Hamilton, like Pace, maintains that "ambition was the flaunting flag of Marlowe; and ambition was the subject that he analyzed ... in all his tragedies," and he writes that "Marlowe imagined a new theme for tragedy—the exhibition of a big man ruined from within by the defects of his own character," adding that "his Jew of Malta was ruined by an insatiable lust for illimitable wealth."[13]

Like Clayton Hamilton, N. Scarlyn Wilson sees that "the eventual downfall [of the protagonist] is a constant factor" in Marlowe's main plays, and that The Jew of Malta reveals "the search for illimitable

[10] Reuben Post Halleck, Halleck's New English Literature (New York: American Book Co., 1913), p. 170.

[11] Harriott Ely Fansler, The Evolution of Technic in Elizabethan Tragedy (1914; rpt. New York: Phaeton Press, 1968), pp. 71-72.

[12] Ibid., p. 72.

[13] Clayton Hamilton, Seen on the Stage (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920), pp. 43 and 47.

wealth."[14] However, unlike Hamilton, Wilson does not attribute Barabas' downfall to defects within his character, but rather to outside factors which Wilson describes only as "mundane influences."[15]

Nancy Brown Blair also asserts that the play "set[s] forth a great lust '... for wealth" but she notes that "in Marlowe's works there is a strong undercurrent of passion," and that "he sympathizes with his principal character. He seems to live in his hero, to work out in him the longings of his own soul."[16]

A sub-group which views Barabas as the study of desire or yearning itself, irrespective of the object of the desire, includes critics such as Symonds and Wendell. Charles Williams also belongs to this sub-group. He writes that "Passionate desire is ... the subject of [the] plays...." and "though The Jew of Malta is a grotesque farce, the undernote is that of sinister and extreme longing."[17] Williams believes that while, "The means which the four protagonists [of Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, Edward II, and The Jew of Malta] take in ... their search ... vary—glory or learning or love of riches," nevertheless, "The search is for satisfaction which ... could not be gained."[18] Williams concludes that Marlowe "was aware of man's limi-

[14] N. Scarlyn Wilson, European Drama (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., 1937), pp. 35-36.

[15] Ibid., p. 36.

[16] Nancy Brown Blair, "Women in Lyly, Peele, Marlowe, Kyd and Green," Master's thesis, Univ. of Colorado Library, 1905, pp. 18-20.

[17] Charles Williams, The English Poetic Mind (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 179.

[18] Ibid., p. 179.

tation. Yet ... he was ... [also] aware of man's power...."[19]

Edwin P. Whipple, who, like Blair, asserts that Marlowe "stamps the image of himself on all his striking delineations,"[20] belongs to the sub-group which sees Barabas as representing great passion. He contends that Barabas,

> in his lustiness, his absence of all weak emotions, his fierce delight in the mere feeling of self, in the heedlessness with which he heaps together rubbish and diamonds and in the frequent "starts and strange far flights of his imagination," ... is the model of irregular genius.[21]

Whipple's words emphasize the passionate nature of Barabas and Marlowe himself, who is the "irregular genius" Barabas is patterned after.

Like Crawshaw, Lewis, Neilson, Thorndike, and Whipple, J.C. Collins perceives Barabas and Marlowe's other main characters as representatives of colossal passion. To Collins, Marlowe is an outstanding poet but not a great dramatist:

> it was in [a] ... translunary sphere that he found his characters.... Of air and fire, not of flesh and blood, are the beings who people his world composed.... They are neither true to life nor consistent with themselves. Where they live they live by virtue of the intensity with which they embody abstract conceptions. They are delineations, not of human beings, but of superhuman passions.[22]

Collins insists that "the ardour of his passion for the ideal, and the intensity with which he has expressed that passion, are what impress

[19] Williams, pp. 180-81.

[20] Whipple, p. 17.

[21] Ibid., p. 18.

[22] Collins, p. 157.

us most in [Marlowe's] dramas."[23] G.E. Woodberry is similarily impressed with Marlowe's ability as a poet and also sees Barabas as an embodiment of immense passion. He writes that "Marlowe's great achievement ... was to rediscover the main source ... of dramatic power. He rediscovered passion, which is the substance of poetry, and made it the substance of drama."[24] He continues:

> In The Jew of Malta, Marlowe selected the second primary passion [the first having been "lust of dominion"] of man, the lust for gold, and he made Barabas a type of the love of wealth.[25]

He asserts that "The passion of the Jew, like that of the conqueror, is single and alone," and that Marlowe had

> discovered passion as the substance of the drama, and had created great embodiments of it in characters that remain types never to be forgotten of the passion he delineated in each.[26]

A sub-group of writers which considers Barabas a yearner for power includes John Henry Ingram, William Lyon Phelps, F.S. Boas and F.P. Wilson. Ingram claims that Barabas' avariciousness represents more than just greed in the play. He writes:

> In this Jew the greed for riches is sublimated and even enobled; his longing for inexhaustible wealth is not the vulgar avarice of a Shylock, heaping up riches for riches' sake, but an intense lust for the acquisition of power, and as a tangible evidence of his supremacy over the rabble.... Barabas [sought] supremacy by the power of wealth.[27]

[23] Collins, p. 161.

[24] Woodberry, pp. 42-43.

[25] Ibid., p. 49.

[26] Ibid., p. 50.

[27] Ingram, p. 155.

The power that wealth can provide, not the wealth for its own sake is what Barabas really wants, Ingram maintains. William Lyon Phelps shares Ingram's conviction. Like Pace, he believes that "in the three plays, Tamburlaine, Faustus and The Jew of Malta ... the emphasis is laid on one character.... And in each instance, this hero is the personification of some mad, devouring ambition,"[28] and he writes that the ambition in The Jew of Malta, is for

> wealth, and the power that wealth brings: he [Barabas] does not wish to be merely a rich man.... He will not rest until he has everything, until he sways empires with his wealth.[29]

Boas, who attests to the prominence of Machiavellian maxims and ideas in the play, also sees Barabas as a study of the yearning for power. He writes:

> Barabas, as first conceived by Marlowe, was more than a representative of the Hebrew race and religion. Within the narrower sphere of finance he is cast in the same mould as Tamburlaine. We see him on his chosen field of battle, with his munitions of war, when in the opening scene of the play he is discovered in his counting-house with heaps of gold before him![30]

Boas maintains that "Barabas, like Tamburlaine, is greedy of sovereignty, but for him it lies not in kingship but in riches" and in support of his contention cites Barabas' words "who is honour'd now but for his wealth?"[31] F.P. Wilson, like Neilson and Thorndike,[32] insists that Barabas is "a man of exceptional power," and he adds that

[28] Phelps, p. 20.

[29] Ibid., p. 21.

[30] Boas, pp. 132-33.

[31] Ibid., p. 134.

[32] See above, pp. 38-39.

Barabas is "seeking exceptional power."[33] Wilson believes that Barabas "values wealth not merely for its own sake but as the sinews of power and for the assurance it gives that he is 'fram'd of finer mould than common men.'"[34]

Edward Dowden, who like Crawshaw, Collins, and others, sees that "The starting point of Marlowe ... is something abstract—a passion or an idea; to a passion or an idea each work ... can be brought back,"[35] is also interested in Barabas' lust for wealth, but he states that,

> We should be straining matters ... if we were to say that Barabas desires money only for the power which its possession confers. This, in his worship of gold, is certainly a chief element, but he loves it also for its own sake with a fond extravagance.[36]

To illustrate his point, Dowden refers to Barabas' reaction after Abigail retrieves his treasure from the nunnery: "[Barabas] hovers amorously over his recovered bags, and sings above them as a lark does above her young."[37]

In reviewing the output of the group which sees Barabas as a passionate yearner, one cannot fail to notice that substantiating references to the text of the play are exceedingly rare, and that the conclusions drawn are remarkably similar, several minor variations notwithstanding. One is reminded of Friedman's observation that much

[33] F.P. Wilson, p. 61.

[34] Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[35] Edward Dowden, Transcripts and Studies (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. Ltd., 1888), p. 434.

[36] Ibid., p. 450.

[37] Ibid., p. 450.

Marlowe criticism seems to have been struck from the same monolithic mould. Indeed, there seems to be a tacit understanding on the part of the writers that the reader has consulted other works concerning Barabas as a passionate yearner, and one cannot help wonder why these critics felt compelled to repeat so much of what their predecessors and contemporaries had already written, especially since the work did not culminate in any new or enlightening interpretation of the plays. A reader is left, after a perusal of numerous articles and books, with a dissatisfied feeling. In the rush to label Barabas, something important has been overlooked. Curiously, it is the significance of Marlowe's portrayal of Barabas as a passionate yearner which has been neglected. The significance of Barabas as a passionate yearner in relation to the total effect of the play has not been explored beyond the assumption that the play is a "study" of the passionate yearner type; nor has the significance of this "study" been explained in relation to Marlowe's purpose in the play. It remains to other writers to transform notions about Barabas as a passionate yearner into a comprehensive interpretation of the play as a whole.

CHAPTER NINE

BARABAS THE OVERREACHER

Harry Levin

Harry Levin has expanded the passionate yearner theory, and his interpretation of Barabas and the play is at once convincing and enlightening. Levin, citing a 1579 parliamentary reference to hyperbole as "overreaching speech" and George Puttenham's 1589 definition of hyperbole as "the Ouer reacher, otherwise called the loud lyer," asserts that Marlowe's "protagonists are overreachers all."[1] He sees that

> the basic convention of Marlovian drama is to take the word for the deed. Words are weapons.... Marlowe contrives his own sound effects, manipulating a language which is not simply a means of communication but a substitute for representation,[2]

and Levin claims that, as a result of this convention "the hero is a consummate rhetorician and, conversely, weakness is represented as speechlessness."[3] He sees the role of Marlowe's protagonists as an example of "the exceptional man:... the overreacher whose tragedy is more of an action than a passion, rather an assertion of man's will

[1] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 42.

[2] Ibid., p. 62.

[3] Ibid., p. 63.

than an acceptance of God's."[4]

Levin points out that Barabas, "Like Tamburlaine and [Marlowe's other protagonists] '... considers himself to be 'fram'd of finer mould than common men.'"[5] Levin notes that in the first act,

> the stage direction indicates heaps of coins; but we are less impressed by them than by Barabas' gesture of dismissal.... We are dazzled, not because riches are dangled before us but because they are tossed aside ... it vastly increases the scale of his affluence to reckon it up so dryly and casually. Barabas out-Herods Tamburlaine by making hyperboles sound like understatements; he values the least of his jewels as a king's ransom,[6]

a reference to Barabas' words in I.i.29-32:

> As one of them, indifferently rated,
> And of a carat of this quantity,
> May serve, in peril of calamity,
> To ransome great kings from captivity.

Levin continues that Barabas is not, however, indifferent to riches, as he (Barabas) "makes it evident that gold is to him what the crown is to Tamburlaine, 'felicity' ... and he completes that blasphemy by marking his buried treasure with the sign of the cross."[7]

Levin sees Barabas' words "Infinite riches in a little room" (I.ii.37) as summing up the essence of Barabas and the essence of the play, because the line contains the "notion of containing the uncontainable."[8] Levin marvels at Marlowe's brilliance in having created such a line:

[4] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 43.

[5] Ibid., p. 80.

[6] Ibid., p. 86.

[7] Ibid., p. 86.

[8] Ibid., p. 86.

> The line ... is perfect in its symmetry, each half begins with the syllable "in" and proceeds through antithetical adjectives to alliterative nouns; six of the ten vowels are short i's.... It is hard to imagine how a larger amount of implication could be more compactly ordered within a single pentameter.[9]

Up to this point, Levin's arguments are enlightening and provocative. Barabas the passionate yearner has become Barabas the overreacher, and Levin's perception of a Barabas whose words and deeds are hyperbolic and whose presence on stage is part of a process of "taking metaphors literally and acting concepts out"[10] is tempting. However, when he endeavours to explain the reason for Barabas' fall, his argument becomes less persuasive. Levin sees that the overreaching Barabas ultimately fails in his reach because of his secret desire to be loved (which led to his trusting of Ferneze and consequently to Barabas' downfall), and he sees this desire for love as Barabas' tragic flaw.

> Barabas ... is conscious of being hated and wants to be loved. To be loved—yes, that desire is his secret shame, the tragic weakness of a character whose wickedness is otherwise unflawed. His hatred is the bravado of the outsider whom nobody loves, and his revenges are compensatory efforts to supply people with good reasons for hating him.... The original miscalculation of Barabas was his failure to reckon with love. It is the dilemma of ... the egoist who cannot live with others or without them.[11]

Levin's thesis appears to be logical, but, in fact, evidence from the text of the play does not support his interpretation. In V.ii.31-34, Barabas says to himself:

[9] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 87.

[10] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[11] Ibid., p. 99.

> But Malta hates me, and, in hating me,
> My life's in danger; and what boots it thee,
> Poor Barabas, to be the Governor,
> Whenas thy life shall be at their command?

In other words, Barabas says: "My life will be in danger because the people hate me, and what is the point of being Governor if my life is at their mercy?" These are not the words of a man who wishes to be enamoured by his people in order to fulfill a secret desire, but the words of a shrewd politician (albeit a self-pitying and perhaps lonely politician, as his words "Poor Barabas" suggest) who realizes his vulnerability in a certain situation. Barabas' words in V.ii.39-44 attest to his awareness, not of a secret need to be loved, but of the political astuteness of his gaining friends:

> For he that liveth in authority,
> And neither gets him friends nor fills his bags,
> Lives like the ass that AEsop speaketh of,
> That labours with a load of bread and wine,
> And leaves it off to snap on thistle tops.
> But Barabas will be more circumspect.

Barabas, then, will be very careful in his position of authority. He will not miss the opportunity to gain friends and riches and is determined to use his position to personal advantage. It is important to note that when Barabas implies that a wise man uses his position of authority to "get him friends," Barabas is <u>not</u> expressing a sentimental yearning for love as Levin would have us believe. The phrase "gets him friends" must be seen in context. It is part of the clause "And neither gets him friends nor fills his bags," and the extremely close association of "gets him friends" with the obviously lucrative "fills his bags"—the phrases together form a single thought in Barabas' reasoning—removes any possibility that Barabas

is speaking of true friendship or love. Rather, he is speaking of the utilitarian kind of "friends" a politician needs to retain power.

Levin's claim that Barabas' covert desire for love led to his failure, is not, then, substantiated by the text. In spite of Levin's valuable contribution to an understanding of the play itself and of Barabas' character and purpose within the play, it is necessary to search elsewhere for a more satisfying interpretation of Barabas' failure—if, indeed, he did fail.

CHAPTER TEN

BARABAS THE UNDERREACHER

Cutts, Friedman

In contrast to Levin's theory of Barabas as an overreacher, Alan Warren Friedman claims that Barabas is not an overreacher but an underreacher—one who is always trying to control unexpected events and return to the status quo, but failing dismally in the attempt. Friedman attacks criticism which fails to treat the play as a cohesive entity and which fails to examine the text closely.[1] He asserts that his essay "is an attempt to see The Jew of Malta as a cohesive unity, a dramatic totality held together by Barabas' decreasing ability to circumscribe events" and he maintains that "Barabas wishes, 'To do that thing that ends all other deeds;/Which shackles accidents and bolts up change' (Antony and Cleopatra, V.ii.5-6)."[2]

Friedman sees Barabas as characterized by selfishness, naiveté and conservatism. He offers definitions of each of the terms: "self-ish—pertaining to or connected with the self; naive—unsuspecting, credulous, and unwary about duplicity or distortion, lacking analytical subtlety and depth; conservative—tending or disposed to maintain existing views, habits, conditions or institutions; moderate; unwilling

[1] See Friedman, p. 156.

[2] Friedman, pp. 156 and 207.

to overreach."[3] While none of the writers already mentioned in this section would argue that Barabas is not selfish, few, if any, would agree that he is naive or conservative: all of them have seen Barabas as struggling for more than the average person's allotment in life; most have seen him as a wily politician scheming and plotting brilliantly until finally defeated by a better schemer than himself—but certainly not defeated because of naiveté. Only Levin has seen the cause of Barabas' downfall to be his trusting of Ferneze, and Levin perceives it to be a tragic flaw in his character, rather than evidence of a generally naive nature. Friedman's claim, then, is truly novel and somewhat astounding. He continues: "In fact, the idea of Barabas as an 'underreacher' ... is implicit thoughout this essay."[4]

To Friedman, Barabas' actions in the play are ultimately and primarily caused not by his greed or by his desire for revenge—although elements of both are present—but by his desire to return to the status quo of the time before Ferneze seized his wealth. He maintains that Barabas was happy with his lot at the beginning of the play, and had no tremendous aspirations: "He [Barabas] accepts the limitations society has placed upon him, and glories ... in having achieved the kind of success by which society usually measures a man's worth [i.e., wealth]."[5] Friedman quotes Barabas' words in I.i.105-119 to substantiate his claim, commenting:

[3] Friedman, p. 156.

[4] Ibid., p. 156.

[5] Ibid., p. 157.

> Barabas thus sees himself as embodying his natural role within a traditional context; unlike Marlowe's other protagonists, ... he desires neither power, office, nor universal acclaim—but simply the self-ish and miserly ... products of ... wealth.[6]

Friedman agrees with Ellis-Fermor's characterization of Barabas:

> "Barabas at the opening of the play, is a man who has become powerful by the steady exercise of native tenacity and intelligence, without being driven by a fierce or fanatic desire for power. Even at the height of his fortunes ... he is not intoxicated by [wealth] . He gives way to no raptures," ... her discussion of Barabas' character is sensitive and intelligent.[7]

Neither Ellis-Fermor nor Friedman seem to have remembered Barabas' feelings of ecstasy in II.i.50-57 when Abigail throws him his treasure. The passage can scarcely be interpreted as anything but evidence of Barabas' intoxication with wealth, and it certainly qualifies as an example of Barabas' "raptures." Friedman insists that all Barabas wants "is simply to be left alone, to be allowed to maintain his status quo regardless of all external factors, including Turkish galleys:

> Why, let'em come, so they come not to war;
> Or let'em war, so we be conquerors.
> (Aside) Nay, let'em combat, conquer, and kill all.
> So they spare me, my daughter and my wealth.
> (I.i.152-155)."[8]

Friedman ascribes Barabas' failure to his misjudgment of both Turks and Christians. He says that Barabas

> misjudges both the Turks—expecting that they will "enter ... take the town" and the Christians [because of] ... his continuing childishly

[6] Friedman, p. 157.

[7] Ibid., p. 157.

[8] Ibid., p. 158.

> naive trust in Ferneze as embodying just social authority and true Christian morality.[9]

Contrary to Friedman's belief, there is no evidence in the play to suggest that Barabas believed the Christians embodied "just social authority" or "true Christian morality." In fact, the play abounds with Barabas' expressions of his dislike for the Christians and of his conviction that the Christians are hypocrites, thieves and sly scoundrels (see, for example, I.ii.164-172; I.ii.116; I.ii.128-130; II.ii.182; II.iii.220; II.iii.314-315; etc.). It is not likely that Barabas, feeling the way he does about the Christians, would see any admirable qualities in them. Friedman gives no examples from the text to support his claim—probably because none exist therein.

As substantiation for his contention that Barabas has a great "desire for the re-establishment of the stability and order,"[10] Friedman cites Barabas' line "Give us a peaceful rule; make Christians kings" (I.i.136). Friedman, however, has taken Barabas' words out of context. The passage of which this line is part, occurs before Barabas has had his money taken from him. The line does not therefore attest to Barabas' desire for the "re-establishment" of stability and order because the event which Friedman perceives as triggering the breakdown of "stability and order" for Barabas (i.e., the theft of his wealth), has not yet taken place. Nevertheless, Friedman is correct in assuming that the line reveals Barabas' preference for a "peaceful rule": a merchant's chances of increasing his business and wealth are much greater during stable times than during periods of upheaval and unrest.

[9] Friedman, p. 158.

[10] Ibid., p. 160.

According to Friedman, Barabas gradually but "totally subordinates his greed, as well as his feeling for Abigail, to his desire for the re-establishment of the stability and order."[11] As support for this statement, Friedman puts forward Barabas' refusal to allow Ferneze to pay him until Barabas had fulfilled his promise, and Barabas' scornful dismissal of the five hundred crowns in his talk with Pilia-Borza. Writers who perceive Barabas as a yearner for wealth might argue that the sums were not sufficient to interest Barabas, and those who see him as a Machiavellian plotter might argue that he was more interested in the success of his schemes at this point, than in the acquisition of some relatively paltry wealth.

Of the second part of the play, Friedman writes:

> The atmosphere of Acts III and IV, where the play supposedly breaks down, serves as an extended metaphor for the psychologically chaotic state of a man backed into a corner and forced to employ the "policy" of the perverters of social order if he is to survive.[12]

He states that Barabas fails because he is unable to stop the flood of consequences of his schemes: "The inadequacy of his poisoned flower device re-emphasizes his fundamental inability, despite all efforts, to dam up the overflowing consequences of his plottings," and he explains that the second part of the play is significant because in this part "the continually externally motivated intriguer has become a re-actor whose stark deeds are visual images parodying the luxurious verbal

[11] Friedman, p. 160.

[12] Ibid., p. 165.

images of the poetry he once spoke."[13] It is a pity that Friedman does not fully develop the idea that Barabas' "stark deeds" in the second part of the play create visual images which parody the verbal images of the first part, as it might have strengthened his argument that the play is a cohesive unit written entirely by Marlowe (see Chapter Five). Instead, he tries to justify the absence of poetry in the second part by claiming that Barabas is so busy with his "stark deeds" that he "has neither the time nor the energy for it [poetry]."[14] This statement implies that Barabas has a choice as to the manner in which he will speak in the play (if he is not too busy, he will use poetry, if he is too busy, he will use something else), thus assigning responsibility for the wording of the play to its main character—Barabas, instead of to its author—Marlowe; a reversal of roles which is clearly unlikely.

Friedman dismisses Barabas' last speech (from the cauldron) as a "verbal attempt to inflate himself" and an attempt "to see himself as the stereotyped villainous Jew."[15] Friedman claims that Barabas really "just does not have it in him, for, with the single exception of the friar incident, Barabas consistently fails to shackle the consequential accidents of his intrigues," concluding that "as he seeks to dam up the overflowing waters of his actions, Barabas bungles the job almost every time."[16]

[13] Friedman, p. 163.

[14] Ibid., p. 163.

[15] Ibid., p. 165.

[16] Ibid., pp. 165-66.

Friedman correctly notes that "The Jew of Malta, unlike Shakespearian tragedy, ends on a note of irresolution, for [there is] no moral order at last re-asserting itself" because Ferneze, "who [is] almost totally evil ... [and] the cleverest and most treacherous deceiver, ultimately triumphs."[17] However, he fails to respond to the implications of Ferneze's return to power, and his argument is finally seen to be both illogical and inconsistent. Friedman has contended that Barabas wanted to return to the status quo, to restore the stability and order represented by Ferneze and the Christians that existed before Ferneze stole his wealth. Friedman admits that in the end Ferneze is returned to power, but he still insists that Barabas failed in his attempt to restore the status quo! Surely if one follows Friedman's argument one must conclude that Barabas ultimately succeeded in his quest: stability and order as represented by Ferneze and the Christians are restored. Even though Barabas himself perished, his alleged goal was ultimately reached. The fact that "moral" order is not installed at the play's end is also beside the point: "moral" order did not exist at the beginning of the play and therefore could not have been restored.

John P. Cutts' perception of Barabas and what he is trying to achieve in the play, is similar to Friedman's in that he sees Barabas as wanting to be left alone, "shut off from the world"[18] and as being "satisfied with such infinite riches [in his 'little room'], seeing in

[17] Friedman, p. 166.

[18] John P. Cutts, The Left Hand of God: A Critical Interpretation of the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Haddonfield, N.J.: Haddonfield House, 1973), p. 169.

them the fulfillment of the promised lands to the seed of Abraham,"[19] before Ferneze interfered. Cutts does not, however, reach Friedman's conclusion that Barabas was trying desperately and unsuccessfully to circumscribe events so that the status quo would be reinstated. Instead, he joins the ranks of the monsterizers of Barabas in concluding that Barabas acts fiendishly out of a desire for revenge. He writes that "Barabas' suffering has called forth his worst potential," that he is reborn "as a monstrous parody of whatever dignity he had been granted earlier" after Abigail gives him his hidden treasure, and that "The very means whereby he regained ... wealth, his daughter Abigail, becomes the first thing to be sacrificed in his epic quest for the deity of revenge."[20]

Cutts is fascinated with the motif of infinite riches in a little room, and hypothesizes that the little room refers not only to the room where Barabas stores his treasure, but also to Barabas' mind. He says that the room is "the little room of Barabas' mind, in which he can gain a deity, be a mighty God"[21] through imagining the power of his wealth. He maintains that Barabas wants "to be in his inner room shut off from the world and all its worrisome problems, its hypocrisy"[22] but he presents no examples from the text to support this statement and he does not enlarge on the nature of the "worrisome problems" or "hypocrisy" Barabas supposedly wishes to avoid. Cutts sees Ferneze's attempt to take away Barabas' wealth as an invasion of

[19] Cutts, p. 150.

[20] Ibid., pp. 156-59.

[21] Ibid., p. 147.

[22] Ibid., p. 169.

Barabas' inner room—an invasion which Barabas would not and could not tolerate: "Beware of involving him in the rottenness of the outside world, because he will play that outside game to the death."[23] He views Ferneze's theft of Barabas' wealth as the act which caused Barabas' hostility to change into a determination to seek revenge not as much for the theft of the wealth itself, as for the invasion of Barabas' inner room: "To see the secrets of his inner room is to die."[24] At the same time, Cutts claims that Barabas, spiderlike, "wants to lure people, as much by her [Abigail] as by his gold, but once they have accepted something from him ... they are automatically doomed."[25] He continues: "Let him stay in his little world of infinite illusion, his 'easy' world of fantastic riches to which every now and again he will invite a chosen victim."[26] Cutts makes no effort to explain why Barabas would wish to lure someone into his inner room if his primary desire was to stay cut off from the world. Apparently, Cutts is unable to see the contradictions within his own argument, and the resulting inconclusiveness of his theories.

Those who perceive Barabas as an underreacher believe that he is content with his place in life and that he has no aspirations until his privacy is invaded and his wealth confiscated. Cutts sees Barabas' subsequent actions as those of revenge, and Friedman contends they are attempts to restore the status quo. In contrast to Levin's view of

[23] Cutts, p. 169.

[24] Ibid., p. 168.

[25] Ibid., p. 168.

[26] Ibid., p. 169.

Barabas' motives and actions as upwardly spiralling, reaching beyond himself, beyond the limits of mankind and society; Friedman and Cutts perceive Barabas' motives and actions as spiralling inward and downward—pulling down into Barabas himself instead of pushing up into the universe. The theory of Barabas as an underreacher, despite its weaknesses and inconsistencies is valuable in that it focuses attention on Barabas' motives in the play and it attempts to see the play as a cohesive unity.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BARABAS THE MACHIAVELLIAN

Boas, Boyer, Craik, Ellis-Fermor, Henderson, Levin, Mahood, Masinton, Meyer, Praz, Ribner, Rowse, Van Fossen, Ward

Considering that the Prologue to The Jew of Malta is spoken by Machevill who announces that Barabas' money has not been gained "without my means," it is hardly surprising that Barabas has been perceived by many students of the play as a representative of Machiavellian ideas—or at least of Machiavellian ideas as the Elizabethans understood them. No review of criticism concerning Barabas' character in the play would be complete without reference to those who perceive Barabas as a Machiavellian. The critics mentioned in this chapter, while sharing a common belief that Barabas is a Machiavellian, differ in their opinions as to the nature and significance of the Machiavellianism he represents, and also in their interpretation (1) of the play as a whole, and (2) of other aspects of Barabas' character within the play.

Most critics in this group, that is, Meyer, Boyer, Praz, Henderson, Boas, Levin, Ribner and Van Fossen, agree that the Elizabethans had an inaccurate perception of Machiavelli and that their understanding of the man and his principles was based largely on Gentillet's highly prejudicial maligning of Machiavelli's writings,

rather than on Machiavelli's work itself. Machiavelli's The Prince was not published in English until 1640, although manuscript translations were in circulation before that date.[1] Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel, which was published in 1576,[2] was mainly responsible for the Elizabethans' distortion of Machiavelli.

Critics Meyer, Boyer, Praz, Henderson and Van Fossen point out that Machiavelli came to be perceived by the Elizabethans as a villain, and those who followed his principles, disreputable to say the least. He became associated with "poison[ing], murder, fraud and violence";[3] the "devil"[4] or "evil incarnate";[5] "diabolical atheism";[6] "cunning and deceit";[7] "Seneca's type of cruel and ruthless tyrant";[8] and an "excessively pragmatic, underhanded, treacherous, atheistic, covetous, self-centered, machinating, inhuman monster."[9]

Praz points out that the term "policy" had come to mean a

[1] Van Fossen, p. xvi.

[2] E. Meyer, Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama (Weimar: Verlag Von Emil Felbar, 1897), p. 13.

[3] Ibid., p. 26.

[4] Clarence Valentine Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (1914; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 51.

[5] Henderson, p. 254.

[6] Mario Praz, "Machiavelli and the Elizabethans," Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. 14 (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1928), 82.

[7] Henderson, p. 255.

[8] Ibid., p. 255.

[9] Van Fossen, p. xvi.

"sleight or trick"[10] by the sixteenth century, and Henderson notes that to the Elizabethans it became "synonymous with cunning and deceit."[11] Ribner writes that, to the Elizabethans, it meant "cunning, the manipulation of worldly affairs and other men by one's own powers of fraud and deception."[12] Since Barabas displays virtually all the qualities listed above he obviously qualifies—in Elizabethan terms at least—for the distinction of Machiavellian.

The author—who is identified only as "H.M."—of the article "On The Jew of Malta" which appeared in Blackwood's Magazine in 1817, claims that the Prologue means that "we are to consider the conduct of Barabas as Marlowe's exemplification of the principles of Machevillism."[13] E. Meyer in 1897 asserted that,

> I found that what the Elizabethans reverted to so often as the maxims of [Machiavelli], were, in four cases out of five, not to be found in his writings at all, but were perverted from the same in a manner infinitely unjust.[14]

Meyer insists that it was "Marlowe [who] first brought [the Elizabethan misconception of] Machiavelli in person upon the stage to speak the prologue to Jew of Malta."[15] In 1899, A.W. Ward explained that the words in the Prologue: "whose wealth had not been amassed 'without my means'" indicate that Barabas "is no common villain, but a

[10] Praz, p. 59.

[11] Henderson, p. 255.

[12] Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" p. 101.

[13] H.M., "On The Jew of Malta," pp. 260-61.

[14] Meyer, p. 1.

[15] Ibid., p. 27.

politic schemer acting on a well-considered system," and Ward asserts that "Barabas fully redeems the promise thus made on his behalf; one at least of his speeches (Act V. line 117 seqq.) has something like the true ring of the Principe itself."[16] Ward further claims that when Barabas becomes "no longer sinned against as well as sinning, we lose ... sympathy with him."[17] For all practical purposes, Ward restricts his comments concerning Machiavellianism to the above: he does not pursue the idea of Machiavellianism as a theme of the play nor does he offer any other thoughts as to Barabas' Machiavellian characteristics. He sees Barabas simply as a representative of Machiavellian principles as the Elizabethans understood them.

Boyer casts Barabas as a "villain-hero" and explains the term thus:

> a villain is a man who, for a selfish end, wilfully and deliberately violates standards of morality sanctioned by the audience or ordinary reader. When such a character is given the leading rôle, and when his deeds form the centre of dramatic interest, the villain has become protagonist, and we have the type-play with the villain as hero.[18]

According to Boyer, Senecan characteristics "are all to be found in The Jew of Malta: Sensationalism, including horror of incident and exaggeration of expression, Rhetoric, Fatalism, Contempt of Death, and Soliloquy" but, he asserts, "Seneca ... can be said to have exerted only a general influence over this tragedy; Machiavelli was

[16] Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature, p. 340.

[17] Ibid., p. 342.

[18] Boyer, p. 8.

its real inspiration."[19] He concludes that Machiavelli was "an influence that accounts specifically, not for the villain as hero, but for the type of villain chosen as hero."[20] In noting that Gentillet's book was the primary cause of misinterpretation of Machiavelli's principles in England, and that Marlowe was "the first to bring Machiavelli on the stage," Boyer's opinion coincides with Meyer's. Boyer sees, however, "that Machiavelli was supposed to be incarnated in the figure of Barabas," contending that "the best evidence" of this incarnation "is to be obtained from the prologue itself, where such a statement is directly made."[21] Boyer is mistaken in his assertion that "such a statement is directly made" in the Prologue. Machevill in the Prologue does not say he is Barabas, but only that he tells the story of a Jew who resembles Machiavelli:

> 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 cram'd;
> Which money was not got without my means.
> I crave but this,—grace him as he deserves,
> And let him not be entertain'd the worse
> Because he favours me. [my emphasis]
> (I. Prologue. 28-35).

Machevill's words "he favours me" do not have the same meaning as "he is me." The words suggest that Barabas may resemble Machevill, and/or that he may willingly employ Machiavellian tactics to achieve his ends, but neither interpretation is the same as an insistence that Barabas is meant to be Machevill himself. Furthermore, Mache-

[19] Boyer, pp. 44-45.

[20] Ibid., p. 30.

[21] Ibid., pp. 39 and 45.

vill's words "I come ... / to present the tragedy of a Jew" clearly mean that it is Machevill's purpose to tell the story of a Jew, and there is nothing in the line that would indicate that the Jew is intended to be Machevill himself. It would seem reasonable, however, that the story Machevill tells would be illustrative of his own principles. Machevill shows in the play that the whole world, protagonist and antagonist, operate by his principles. He is not restricted to one character, but is present in all the characters, in the plot, in the very spirit of life that surrounds and infuses the play. Boyer's contention that "'Machiavel' simply states that he lives again in the person of the Jew who is to play the leading rôle in the ensuing tragedy,"[22] is not substantiated by the text of the play, nor does it seem logical to believe that Machevill would equate himself with Barabas, for why would he want to tell a story of how he finally loses out? Machiavellian principles are not restricted to Barabas or to any one character, but abound in the spirit of life in the play. For a while Barabas is dominant, but even when he falls his spirit and his principles live on. Ferneze appears to triumph, but he, like Barabas, is merely a pawn in a game played and controlled by Machevill.

Boyer asserts that Marlowe accurately portrayed some aspects of <u>true</u> Machiavellianism in his character Barabas. He writes, for example, that,

> The ridding one's self of accomplices is the very essence of Machiavellism. It ... is discussed in <u>The Prince</u>, Chapter VIII. Barabas adopted the same

[22] Boyer, p. 46.

> policy, and it became a characteristic of Machiavellian villains,[23]

and also that "egotism is one of the distinguishing features of Machiavellism" and he says that the same idea is present in Barabas' words "For, so I live, perish may all the world!" (V.v.II).[24] Other characteristics Barabas possesses which Boyer insists are truly Machiavellian include subtlety, a dissembling nature prone to religious hypocrisy, and a keen eye for every advantage that may be gained by political shrewdness.[25]

Stating that "Marlowe seems to deserve the credit for establishing this particular character-type," and that, after Barabas, "Machiavellian villain-heroes at once became popular and ran a long course on the stage," Boyer adds that "They seem to have been divided into two types, those whose chief motive was revenge, like Barabas, and those whose ruling motive was ambition, like Tamburlaine."[26] As examples of the ambition type he gives Richard III whom he sees as "the perfect Machiavellian," and Macbeth, who he says is "no Machiavellian at all."[27] His examples of the revengeful type include Aaron and Iago.[28] It is interesting that he sees Barabas' ruling motive as revenge and not ambition. The writers who perceive Barabas as a passionate yearner placed ambition before revenge in listing

[23] Boyer, p. 42.

[24] Ibid., p. 41.

[25] See Boyer, pp. 49-51.

[26] Boyer, pp. 220-21.

[27] Ibid., p. 221.

[28] Ibid., p. 221.

Barabas' chief motives. This disagreement results—to a great degree—from affixing a label to a character without allowing for the character to possess an individuality of his own. Such labelling deadens both idea and dramatic characterization and often leads on to contradiction. Barabas is first and foremost a memorable stage personality. He may owe his antecedents to the devil, to Machiavelli, to forces of overriding passion and ambition, etcetera, but such histrionic genetics do not make a figure into a stand-in for an idea, any more than inherited personality traits mean that the individual possesses no true individuality. As long as passionate, ambitious and Machiavellian are seen as descriptive qualities, they may be (though not necessarily are) enlightening components. When they are used as critical boundaries, however, they delimit dramatic life and often lead to tedious and contradictory conclusions.

Mario Praz supplies a sobering overview to the myopic assertions of the likes of Boyer and Meyer. Praz, while admitting that Gentillet's book Contre-Machiavel was effective in causing widespread misinterpretation of Machiavelli's principles, holds that it "was not the sole source for the English travesty of Machiavelli" as Machiavelli had been "already mentioned with a sinister connotation in the [Robert] Sempill Ballads referring to Scottish political events ... as early as 1568, ... 1570, ... and 1572."[29] Praz also points out that Machiavelli did not invent the ideas which came to be called Machiavellian, he merely "supplied a label, a cliché, for describing

[29] Praz, pp. 53 and 52.

methods which had been in use since remote antiquity."[30] Praz also notes that,

> the question of Machiavellian influences on Elizabethan drama is complicated by the influence of [The Jew of Malta and Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy], which was still more far-echoing than it is thought.[31]

Like Boyer, he maintains that The Jew of Malta "gave birth to the type of the Machiavellian knave on the Elizabethan stage,"[32] but unlike Boyer he asserts that The Spanish Tragedy shared the honour. Praz reports that the "mythical Machiavelli" as perceived by the Elizabethans "suggested chiefly... a treacherous way of killing, generally by poison; ... and diabolical atheism,"[33] and he continues that "in Barabas [we have] Machiavel in the role of the Miser."[34] According to Praz, "The dramatists were chiefly responsible for giving currency to the legend [of Machiavelli as disreputable and villainous],"[35] and

> The Senecan drama was ... the medium through which Machiavellian principles, distorted as they had been, came to be uttered from the stage. Machiavellism, as epitomized by Gentillet, provided an up-to-date equipment of ideas to the worn-off classical tyrant.[36]

Of Barabas as a "miser-Machiavel," Praz writes that Barabas

[30] Praz, pp. 54-55.

[31] Ibid., p. 75.

[32] Ibid., p. 75.

[33] Ibid., pp. 80-82.

[34] Ibid., p. 84.

[35] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[36] Ibid., p. 71.

> is above all a monstrous miser. His money "was not got without my means" Machiavelli says of him in the prologue, and, in a much-quoted passage in the Second Act ("As for my selfe, I walk abroad a-nights"), Barabas enumerates the stratagems which have made him rich.[37]

Praz is emphatic that,

> Nothing could be less true to the historical teaching of Machiavelli, who warned his Prince to avoid, of all things, robbing his subjects, since, he says, man forgets earlier the death of his father than the loss of his patrimony (Principe xvii),[38]

but, like the other critics mentioned above, Praz fails to explore the possible implications of Barabas as representative of the Elizabethan misconception of Machiavelli, as opposed to true Machiavellianism. His belief that Barabas was an accurate representative of Machiavelli as the Elizabethans perceived him may be correct, but because he fails to elaborate on the significance of his observation to The Jew of Malta as a whole, the application of Praz's views is largely left to the reader.

Some critics mentioned above have noted that Marlowe probably had access to Machiavelli's actual works as well as Gentillet's prejudicial interpretation of them. Praz states, for example, that "Marlowe certainly, and Kyd very likely, had a fair knowledge of Machiavelli's doctrines. Marlowe had studied in Cambridge, where Machiavelli's writings were eagerly read."[39] However, none of these critics have offered any further explanation as to why Marlowe would have deliber-

[37] Praz, pp. 51-52.

[38] Ibid., p. 52.

[39] Ibid., p. 75.

stely and knowingly misrepresented Machiavelli's principles in his creation of Barabas, other than that it was an opportune way to revitalize the Senecan stock character of the villain.[40] That Marlowe may have had another purpose in mind than to be disseminator of Machiavellianism in England is not acknowledged by Boyer, Praz, et al.

Rarely does a critic insist that Marlowe's Barabas is a just and true representative of Machiavelli's principles, but Ellis-Fermor is one such critic. She writes that, in The Jew of Malta, Marlowe

> tends to isolate from the body of Machiavelli's philosophy those parts which were most arresting and most extreme; he invests his villains with cold-blooded determination to compass their ends by whatever means will serve them best, and wade, if necessary "through slaughter to a throne"[41]

and that while "in the denunciation of religion ... Marlowe was a little beyond his commission.... In all else ... he represents him [Machiavelli] fairly."[42] Noting that "The dauntless courage and ruthlessness of Machiavelli's doctrines seem at first to have made a strong appeal to Marlowe," she hypothesizes that "The Jew of Malta may have been written in the first burst of this enthusiasm."[43] She believes that Marlowe uses Machiavellian ideas as "another expression of ... aspiration."[44] She is convinced that Marlowe tried to harness aspiration and Machiavellian principles, and that Machiavelli's ideas

[40] Praz, p. 94.

[41] Ellis-Fermor, p. 89.

[42] Ibid., p. 93.

[43] Ibid., p. 89.

[44] Ibid., p. 91.

about "building and sustaining an absolute monarchy in the midst of intrigue" while "not a study of the aspiring soul of man or of his desire to exceed his moral nature" were so attractive to Marlowe that "in his first Machiavellian figure, Barabas, ... Marlowe endeavours to harness the two together."[45] To Ellis-Fermor, the doctrines of The Prince "by no means represented his [Marlowe's] interpretation of life," but the "honesty" and "unemotional clearness" of Machiavellian thought appealed to Marlowe.[46] In spite of the highly speculative nature of her assertion that Marlowe "represents Machiavelli fairly," Ellis-Fermor must at least be credited with an attempt to see Barabas as more than simply a stand-in for an idea. A character gives ideas life, yet most of the critics see the idea as begetting a figure, which reduces the character and the drama and often results in dull and contradictory interpretations of the play.[47]

Noting that Barabas is not driven by desire for power at the beginning of the play, and that "extreme suffering" causes "Barabas' mind [to lose] its balance," Ellis-Fermor maintains that even after "ferocity and cunning" have taken possession of Barabas' mind, "he is ... a man whose habit of thought is honest, beset on all sides by trickery and hypocrisy," because Barabas does not "deceive himself"; he is no hypocrite.[48] Unfortunately, Ellis-Fermor's argument displays a tendency to stretch the facts of the play to suit her own purpose,

[45] Ellis-Fermor, p. 91.

[46] Ibid., pp. 91-92.

[47] See above, pp. 134-41.

[48] Ellis-Fermor, pp. 98-99.

as it is hardly fair to assume that Barabas has an honest habit of thought merely because he does not deceive himself, and Ellis-Fermor offers no other illustrations to explicate her position. Her conclusion that Marlowe "reveals in his Jew a strong, dominating nature driven by the practices of the world ... to adopt the tactics of that world"[49] cannot be accepted because she has produced no corroborative evidence to prove that Barabas was untainted at the play's beginning. In fact, she has totally ignored the words of Machevill in the Prologue who says that Barabas' gold was not gained without his (Machevill's) means and that Barabas "favours" him—which are indications that Barabas was, in fact, marred by Machiavellian methods at the play's beginning.

Ellis-Fermor also sees the play as a "pitiless revelation of the effects of [Machiavellian] policy, and ... an implicit denunciation of the system itself and of the society which forced into such service the soaring spirit of man,"[50] insisting that it is Marlowe's purpose to demonstrate that the nature of principles Barabas employed was "fatal."[51] Ellis-Fermor does not, however, explain how the Machiavellianism of the rest of the world, which she has presumed forces Barabas himself to adopt Machiavellianism, fits into this "denunciation": she apparently fails to notice that the rest of the world does triumph, and that what she herself has termed Machiavellian tactics do triumph in the end. Because she does not offer an

[49] Ellis-Fermor, p. 101.

[50] Ibid., p. 102.

[51] Ibid., p. 101.

explanation as to how Marlowe could have allowed Machiavellian tactics to triumph, and still to have denounced these tactics, her conclusion unfairly superimposes a task of resolution upon Marlowe, a task of her own making.

Philip Henderson sees The Jew of Malta as a "Machiavellian play ... a dramatic exploitation of Machiavelli's philosophy of political opportunism."[52] His opinion about the play is similar to that of Ellis-Fermor in that he believes that the "ruthlessness ... of Machiavelli's doctrines made a strong appeal to Marlowe," that "the pursuit of beauty is practically banished," and that the play is a "descent into the world of affairs from that of poetic abstraction."[53] Unlike Ellis-Fermor, who asserts that the honesty of Machiavellian thought was attractive to Marlowe, Henderson states that it was the "cynicism of Machiavellian doctrines"[54] that particularly appealed to him. According to Henderson, "The Jew of Malta is the first play of Marlowe's which is totally devoid of idealism," and "At last we are in the real world of men and affairs, where the dominating motive is money."[55] At this point, Henderson's argument becomes confusing as he contends that,

> In coming to terms with the world, giving the public what it wanted and writing quite frankly for money, Marlowe makes a clean sweep of his earlier ideals. He is now a theatrical journalist.[56]

[52] Henderson, p. 252.

[53] Ibid., p. 253.

[54] Ibid., p. 253.

[55] Ibid., p. 257.

[56] Ibid., p. 253.

It would appear that Henderson, like many earlier critics, has confused Marlowe the artist with Marlowe the man. It does not necessarily follow, of course, that if Marlowe the artist wishes to explore the "world of men and affairs" instead of the world of "ideals," that Marlowe the man must have rejected his own ideals, and it apparently has not occurred to Henderson that Marlowe may have attempted to study certain ideals through the medium of the "world of men and affairs" in his play. Henderson's dismissal of Marlowe as merely a "theatrical journalist" is uncalled for and his pronouncement unjustified, because it overlooks the fact that an artist exploring ideas in a play should not be confused with a private individual offering his personal opinion, and also that the artist has available to him an almost infinite number of ways—not all of which are immediately or superficially apparent to the onlooker—for expressing those ideas. Henderson points out that the play demonstrates that "It's money that talks in this world; the Jew knows that and so, one gathers, he has not been over-scrupulous about how he got it."[57] Unlike Ellis-Fermor, he sees that "Barabas' adoration of wealth is so fervent that it is almost a religion," and that in the play "Barabas does nothing with all this wealth but gloat over it in solitude, hoarding up 'Infinite riches in a little room,'"[58] Like Harry Levin, Henderson notes that Barabas considers the riches to be "the blessings promised to the Jews."[59]

[57] Henderson, p. 260.

[58] Ibid., pp. 260-61.

[59] Ibid., p. 261.

With reference to the hypocrisy of the Christians in the play, "The moral we are invited to draw," Henderson says, "is that while the Jew is not deceived in his own motives, for his villainy is forced on him by persecution, the behaviour of the Christians is infinitely worse because they deceive themselves under cover of an indignant self-righteousness."[60] While Henderson may be correct in judging Christian behaviour to be "infinitely worse" than Barabas', his hypothesis that they "deceive themselves" is unproved. Certainly the Christians in the play believe that Christianity is the only means of spiritual attainment and that all outsiders are infidels, pagans and/or blasphemers, and such uncritical assumptions may be considered self-deception. However, in spite of common assumptions to the contrary, belief in an idea or ideal does not necessarily entail correspondingly appropriate behaviour—or, in fact, behaviour of any sort: a person may believe many things but never act upon any of them.[61] Henderson refers specifically to the behaviour of the Christians, and the behaviour of the Christians in this play has very little to do with the self-deception resulting from an honest and personal faith. These Christians actively and knowingly employ the well-known fact that Christians of the time believed that persons of other faiths were blasphemers and/or infidels, for their own materialistic gain, and not for anything concerning spiritual purity or motivation. There is no evidence in the text which suggests that they deceive themselves

[60] Henderson, p. 257.

[61] See Lawrence Kohlberg, "Development of Moral Character and Moral Ideology," Review of Child Development Research, Vol. 1 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1964).

by considering that their behaviour is appropriate and divinely or spiritually motivated, although they certainly do attempt to impress and deceive others with a front of self-righteous protestation.

It must be mentioned, too, that Henderson, like Ellis-Fermor, either misses or ignores the significance of the Christians' triumph at the end of the play.

F.S. Boas believes that Machiavellian precepts did influence Marlowe and he writes that Marlowe's "critical faculty, sharpened by his governmental service, was fortified further by the study of the maxims of 16th-century Italian statecraft, considered without relation to the special conditions in which they originated."[62] Boas does not explain what "the special conditions" are, or how Marlowe misrepresents Machiavelli in the play, except to indicate that his lines "I count religion but a childish toy,/And hold there is no sin but ignorance" do "misrepresent Machiavelli,"[63] although he leaves it largely to the reader to apply the connection.

To Boas, the play is primarily a series of "Machiavellian plot and counterplot."[64] Boas sees that Barabas, who "even in his dizzying elevation [as Governor] ... does not forget the maxims of The Prince," is a Machiavellian, but he does not describe Barabas' Machiavellian characteristics (except to mention that Barabas the Governor "knows that the Maltese hate him and that he must find means

[62] Boas, p. 135.

[63] Ibid., p. 135.

[64] Ibid., p. 145.

to make his place secure"[65]), nor does he explore the implications of Barabas' Machiavellianism (such as its relationship to events in the play, and particularly its significance to the ultimate success of the Christians and defeat of Barabas) in the play.

It has already been noted that Harry Levin perceives Barabas as an overreacher. He also sees Barabas as a Machiavellian, maintaining that the play is a study "in the more distinctively Machiavellian realm of policy" and that Barabas is "an immoralist who acknowledges values by overturning them."[66] Levin is the first critic to offer a reason—other than that Marlowe wished to update the Senecan villain-hero stock character—for Marlowe's deliberate misrepresentation of Machiavellian doctrines. He notes that "in the prologue, ... Marlowe based his speech on a Latin monologue by Gabriel Harvey, and both scholar-poets were in a position to know how grossly they distorted Machiavelli's doctrine and personality" but, he continues,

> in misrepresenting him, they voiced a state of mind which he anticipated ... : the impatience with words and ideas, the special fascination with brutal facts, that marks the disaffected intellectual. Might could be right, snarls Machiavel, and fortification more important than learning.[67]

The play, Levin goes on to say, "emphasizes conspiracy rather than conquest, ... policy rather than prowess," and the word "policy" is actually "mentioned thirteen times ... and serves to associate

[65] Boas, p. 145. It is interesting that Boas sees this as evidence of Barabas' loyalty to Machiavellian principles, while Levin and Friedman see it as evidence of Barabas' weakness and disloyalty to Machiavellian doctrine.

[66] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 56.

[67] Ibid., p. 81.

Barabas with Machiavelli."[68] According to Levin, Barabas' "policy spins a plot for The Jew of Malta which can be pursued on three interconnecting levels," which Levin describes:

> [There is an] over-plot, framed by the siege, [which] is the interrelationship between the Christians and Jews, the Spaniards and Turks. It is connected with the main plot through the peculations of Barabas, who is caught up in the underplot through his misplaced confidence in Ithamore. The bonds of self-interest connect the central intrigue, which involves usury, with power politics upon the upper level and with blackmail upon the lower.[69]

Furthermore, Levin says, "Morally, all of them [the three plots] operate on the same level, and that is precisely what Marlowe is pointing out.... The principle of double-dealing ... prevails on all sides in Malta."[70] Levin supplies several examples from the text in support of his contention. He also maintains that as Barabas progresses, Machiavellian elements become increasingly evident and dominant in the play: "the foreground [of the play] is dominated by The Prince."[71] He points to the spiralling effect of Marlowe's plot structure in the play, concluding that,

> In the fourth act [Barabas] is blackmailed not only by Bellamira and her bravo, but by the pair of Friars. His countermeasures lead him, in the fifth act, upward and onward into the realms of the higher blackmail, where Turks demand tribute from Christians and Christians from Jews.[72]

[68] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 82.

[69] Ibid., pp. 87-88.

[70] Ibid., pp. 88-90.

[71] Ibid., p. 96.

[72] Ibid., p. 96.

"Barabas," as Levin would have it, "is a consistent Machiavellian when, at the very pinnacle of his career, he soliloquizes on Turks and Christians; 'Thus loving neither, will I live with both, / Making a profit of my policie.'"[73]

Levin, as has been noted, sees Barabas' weakness and cause of his ultimate downfall to be his need for love. Levin also insists that Barabas' counterplots amounted to practically nothing: they "exceeded the proportions of tragedy" causing "his discomfiture" in the end to be "more like the happy endings of melodrama."[74] The "moral issue" of the play, according to Levin, is "the simple choice between folly and knavery," and, while Levin concedes that the play demonstrates that the distance between "these two extremes ... can be precariously narrow," he nevertheless believes that Barabas is acting out the "object lesson of a scoundrel who is too clever for his own good."[75] His conclusion that the play "deserves to be classed as a farce—or, at any rate, a melodrama,"[76] accords with that of T.S. Eliot.

Levin admits that "To show the betrayer betrayed, the engineer hoist in his petard, the 'reaching thought' of Barabas overreached, is the irony of ironies,"[77] but, like the other critics mentioned above, he fails to explore the implications of the Christians' success at the end of the play. According to Levin,

[73] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 82.

[74] Ibid., p. 101.

[75] Ibid., p. 101.

[76] Ibid., p. 103.

[77] Ibid., p. 97.

> Barabas stews in the juice of his tragic pride, foiled and foiled again, like the melodramatic villain he has become. Malta is preserved; murder will out; the reward of sin is death; vengeance belongs to the Lord. This is exemplary but commonplace doctrine and we clambered through a labyrinth to reach it,[78]

but this conclusion contains no mention of the irony of each part of this "exemplary but commonplace doctrine." Malta is preserved only for its return to Ferneze who is an even better Machiavellian schemer than Barabas; murder does not necessarily "out," for Ferneze murders Barabas (by cutting the cord and sending him into the cauldron) and turns the murder to his (Ferneze's) advantage with the Turks and the Maltese; the reward of Ferneze's sin in stealing Barabas' money is not his own death but Barabas'; and vengeance does not belong to the Lord in this play but to Ferneze, who says to the dying Barabas "I'll see thy treachery repaid" (V.v.78), and he does witness Barabas' death. It is unfortunate that Levin did not apply his notion of Barabas' dilemma to the irony of the play's ending in his otherwise enlightening and provocative discussion of the play.

Like Ellis-Fermor and, to a certain extent; Harry Levin, Ribner sees the play as a denunciation of Machiavellian principles. "Marlowe," according to Ribner, "mirrored in his plays his own changing vision of man's place in the universe."[79] He explains that there are

> two polar positions in Marlowe's view of the world.... at one end an emphasis upon the limitless potentialities of mankind which we find in Dido and the first

[78] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 98.

[79] Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" p. 91.

> part of Tamburlaine.... At the other end ... is that sense of human limitation and defeat, what Una Ellis-Fermor called the "mood of spiritual despair," ... in Edward II and Doctor Faustus,[80]

and that he believes The Jew of Malta is "a play which stands midway between the two extremes of Marlowe's vision."[81] Ribner contends that "the Machiavellian view of the world so proudly asserted in Tamburlaine, is in The Jew of Malta subjected to ridicule."[82] To Ribner, Tamburlaine is a "revelation" of "the Machiavellian ideal of the lawgiver, the superman who by his own virtù, his power of mind and will, can arrest the process of decay ... and create new nations,"[83] while The Jew of Malta is an exploration of "the implications of policy in human affairs."[84] Barabas, he says, "at the beginning ... is like Tamburlaine a man of boundless power and imagination" and "by his name ... the antithesis of Christ."[85] Like Ellis-Fermor, Ribner sees Barabas as a "pagan superman who is wronged" and uses "policy to repay his wrongs."[86] However, Ribner also insists that the "exercise of policy vitiates the superman and destroys his heroic image, lowering him beneath even those who have sinned against him," concluding that Barabas develops into a monster, "the incarnation of evil," and he cites approvingly Ellis-Fermor's

[80] Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" p. 92.

[81] Ibid., p. 92.

[82] Ibid., p. 92.

[83] Ibid., p. 94.

[84] Ibid., p. 101.

[85] Ibid., p. 101.

[86] Ibid., p. 102.

observation that Barabas becomes a "satanist who rebels against unclean and unjust things."[87] To Ribner, the play "portrays the degeneration of a man through the manner in which he reacts to evil in the world," and the play is, therefore, "not the 'farce' which T.S. Eliot has called it, [but] Marlowe's first tragedy."[88]

He contends that the play is one in which "the failure of policy receives ... dramatic emphasis," and in which Marlowe has begun "to question the faith in the power of human mind and will which he had so proudly asserted in Tamburlaine."[89] Ribner cites approvingly Levin's thesis that Barabas' failure was due to the need for love and his consequent trust in Ferneze, and he points out that, "Caricature of the 'Machiavel' as Barabas is, he violates the most essential elements of Machiavelli's creed, and his defeat is the failure of the Machiavellian ethic."[90] According to Ribner, the "Machiavel" of the Prologue "is not the Machiavelli to whose view of the world Marlowe had given his assent in Tamburlaine," but rather "the Machiavel of burlesque tradition" who speaks "the precepts ... of Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel" which bore "little relation to anything Machiavelli himself had written."[91] He notes that Marlowe based his Prologue on Gabriel Harvey's Epigramma in effigiem Machiavelli, which was based, in turn, on Gentillet's work; and Ribner cites

[87] Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" p. 103.

[88] Ibid., p. 103.

[89] Ibid., p. 103.

[90] Ibid., p. 103.

[91] Ibid., p. 104.

Levin to demonstrate that both men knew that Contre-Machiavel was a distortion of Machiavelli's doctrines. Ribner says that Barabas' conduct "though supposedly Machiavellian, is almost always in direct contradiction to Machiavelli's principles," and he poses the suggestive possibility that "Marlowe, in order to make clear the deficiency of policy, was able to use a sterotyped caricature of what in an earlier play he had seriously espoused."[92] Ribner thus sees Tamburlaine as a true Machiavellian, and Barabas as a caricature of a Machiavellian—designed to illustrate the failure of Machiavellianism as a view of the world. His conclusion that "In The Jew of Malta we have the defeat of policy"[93] fails to take into consideration the final triumph of Ferneze, who, like Barabas, employs "policy" in the play. Nevertheless, Ribner's study demonstrates an advance in application of the Machiavellian backdrop to the play. Like Friedman, he does realize that "we do not have the triumph of ["policy's"] antithesis [at the play's end].... For the triumph of virtue we must move ... to The Massacre at Paris."[94] He sees that,

> Ferneze the Christian and Calymath the Turk are each as guilty as Barabas.... [they] all live by the same code, the success of one following upon the downfall of the other, as each is able to seize the advantage and practise his policy the more efficiently.[95]

Ribner does not, however, pursue the implications of his statement. He apparently fails to realize that Barabas' downfall is Ferneze's triumph, and if Ferneze lives "by the same code" (i.e., by "policy"),

[92] Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke glasse,'" p. 104.

[93] Ibid., p. 103.

[94] Ibid., p. 104.

[95] Ibid., p. 104.

this "policy" is, through Ferneze, triumphant. It is not logical to conclude that the play exhibits the failure or defeat of "policy," as "policy" for Ferneze was not a failure, but a success. It would appear that the true Machiavellian—Ferneze—has triumphed, while the imperfect Machiavellian—Barabas—has perished. If one follows Ribner's line of thought, it would seem logical to conclude, not that the play exhibits the defeat of Machiavellian "policy," but that it demonstrates the failure of imperfect or "caricatured" Machiavellian "policy," and demonstrates the inevitable triumph of true Machiavellian tactics.

A.L. Rowse does not provide a detailed study of Machiavellian ideas or Barabas' character in the play, but he does offer an opinion of Marlowe's use of Machiavellianism in the play which is markedly different from that of Ellis-Fermor, Levin and Ribner. Like Philip Henderson, Rowse contends that Marlowe exploited Machiavellianism because "it provided matter for drama" (sensibly enough), and also that Marlowe was not interested in any "moralizing" purpose.[96] Rowse writes:

> Having brought off a double triumph with Tamburlaine, [Marlowe] was hardly likely to miss the chance of giving his public something of the same recipe for success--the exotic, the Oriental flavour, the sensational.[97]

According to Rowse, "we have the feeling that his attitude to Machiavellianism is an ambivalent one" and that Marlowe's purpose was the "exposure ... of Machiavellianism on the stage" as much due to his

[96] Rowse, p. 86.

[97] Ibid., p. 82.

(Marlowe's) interest in contemporary politics and the Machiavellian events occurring in real life around him, as to his interest in the "Renaissance Italianate virtù, the principle of man's force to achieve in and for himself alone."[98]

Van Fossen reaches no definitive conclusion about Marlowe's use of Machiavellianism in the character of Barabas or in the play itself. He points out that "the conceptions, or misconceptions, of Jewish character and of Machiavellian doctrine ... might almost be said to underlie everything else," and, like Ellis-Fermor, Henderson, Ribner and Levin, he notes that "the unscrupulousness in personal and commercial relations" which characterizes Barabas, is common to "almost everyone in the play ... : all (save ... Abigail and a few of the minor characters) operate in terms of 'policy' in its pejorative Elizabethan sense.... "[99] Van Fossen concludes that the play is a "serious farce" and that it

> is concerned largely with persons motivated by the basest causes and acting on the basest principles: this world is full of hypocrisy, expedience, greed, and vengeance. It does show a world of evil values and culpable behavior, values and behavior which we are not asked to applaud, though whose power we must, perforce, respect.[100]

Thomas Craik's perception of The Jew of Malta is similar to that of Henderson and Rowse in that he sees Marlowe's use of Machiavellianism as serving primarily a dramatic purpose in the play. To Craik, "The play is essentially neither propagandist nor moralistic,

[98] Rowse, pp. 85-86.

[99] Van Fossen, pp. xv, xxi and xxii.

[100] Ibid., p. xxiii.

but dramatic,"[101] and

> Marlowe's prologues ... are reliable statements of what the plays contain: this one [in The Jew of Malta] establishes that "Machiavellism" is widespread, even among those who openly repudiate it, and that the Jew ... is in general terms a Machiavellian (whose "money was not got without my means").[102]

Craik disagrees with Henderson, Ellis-Fermor and others that "the Jew has been turned into a monster by the Christians' injustice," pointing to Barabas' account of his wicked career in the passage beginning "As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights" (II.iii.179-203), as Marlowe's attempt "to correct (as the Prologue should forestall) the wrong inference" because Barabas "was selfish and deceitful before his wealth was ... confiscated."[103] Like Van Fossen, Ellis-Fermor, Henderson, Ribner and Levin, Craik notes that Marlowe is not content to "make the villain the only schemer" and he describes how the Governor, the Friars and Ithamore are all "schemers" as well, but he does not pursue the implications of the fact, concluding that "moral questions are not seriously discussed: they are ironically touched upon and left," and that "The Jew of Malta is essentially a play for the theatre."[104]

M.M. Mahood believes that Barabas is a poor hero, one whose character shows "impoverishment" in comparison with that of Tamburlaine and Faustus, and that,

[101] Craik, p. xiv.

[102] Ibid., p. xi.

[103] Ibid., p. xi.

[104] Ibid., pp. xi, xiv, and xviii.

> Such pronouncements as: "in extremitie/We ought to make barre of no policie ..." and "And, since by wrong thou gott'st authority,/Maintain it bravely by firme policy ..." identify Barabas as a Machiavellian since a "politician" on the Elizabethan stage was always an admirer of Machiavelli's opportunist doctrines.[105]

Like most of the other critics above, she contends that Barabas "is not ... the only villain in the piece" as "no character is fundamentally better than the frankly opportunist Barabas," and she points out that "The Christians among whom he lives have long since diverted their worship from God to Mammon."[106] Nevertheless, her conclusion that,

> while [Marlowe] felt the Machiavellian realist to be superior to his hypocritic idealistic victims, he understood the impoverishment entailed by Barabas' materialistic outlook ... and by the end of the play the Jew has become a monster,[107]

reveals that she has not considered the possibility that the other characters in the play (whom she has previously labelled "villains") also represent Machiavellian principles.

Charles G. Masinton notes that "one of the most difficult problems" in Marlowe's plays "is explaining the great disparity between the transcendental (or at least grandiose) aims of the protagonist on the one hand, and the unrestrained fury and vengeance or petty self-indulgence by which he eagerly seeks to achieve his aims,

[105] M.M. Mahood, "The Jew of Malta: A Contracted World," Critics on Marlowe, ed. Judith O'Neill (Florida: Univ. of Miami Press, 1970), pp. 44 and 45-46.

[106] Ibid., p. 46.

[107] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

on the other."[108] Like Ribner, Masinton cites approvingly Ellis-Fermor's thesis that "the irreconcilable split ... is the result of [Marlowe's] knowledge of Machiavelli's cold appraisal of human nature, and ... Marlowe's plays show a growing sense of defeat and pessimism as he continues to explore the ramifications of Machiavelli's thinking."[109]

Marlowe realized, Masinton continues, that "certain limits are permanent, and when man aspires beyond them ... he inevitably becomes base and destructive."[110] Masinton contends that this "is the tragic human condition implied in Marlowe's plays" and that this "tragic human condition" explains the disparity between the protagonist's grandiose aims and the "unrestrained fury" with which he seeks to achieve them.[111] According to Masinton, the "force that ignites in the protagonist an irresistible passion to transcend the boundaries ... is his remarkable power of imagination," and this "creative imagination [is] ironically, both the source of his inspiration and the cause of his misery."[112] He asserts that Marlowe "concern[s] himself with the horrifying practical results of man's single-minded urge to fulfill the exciting visions of power and pleasure conjured

[108] Charles G. Masinton, "Marlowe's Artists: The Failure of Imagination," Ohio Univ. Review: Contributions to the Humanities (Athens), 11 (1969), 22.

[109] Ibid., p. 22.

[110] Ibid., p. 23.

[111] Ibid., p. 23.

[112] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

up in his imagination."[113] Masinton's conclusion that the failure of the protagonist is "potent testimony that man's inventive and creative capabilities are themselves irredeemably corrupt,"[114] is reminiscent of Ribner's assertion that Marlowe, in presenting the "failure of policy" in the play, demonstrates the deficiency of "the power of human mind and will." However, like Ribner, Masinton neglects to take into consideration at least one significant factor: the Christians' triumph at the end of the play. He does not explain why, if the protagonist fails because his "inventive and creative capabilities are irredeemably corrupt," the Christians (who prove, ultimately, to possess even greater inventive and creative capabilities because they out-manoeuvre Barabas) should be successful. Masinton's argument is that Marlowe's purpose is to prove these capabilities corrupt. If so, it would be logical for Marlowe to have caused the Christians to fail as well. Masinton's failure to notice this disparity in his own argument is particularly surprising because, as the following paragraphs will testify, Masinton does perceive certain ironic implications in the Christians' final success.

In spite of the above flaw in his argument, Masinton goes on to make a valuable contribution to the body of Jew of Malta criticism. Of all those dealing with Machiavellianism in Marlowe, Masinton alone appears to sense that Marlowe uses the Italian political theorist for his dramatic potential and not to advance social ideas. He

[113] Masinton, "Marlowe's Artists: The Failure of Imagination," p. 24.

[114] Ibid., p. 24.

offers a forceful discussion of Barabas by stressing not so much his use of political manipulation as his dramatic stance. Masinton sees that Barabas is "meant to be appreciated in theatrical terms."[115] Admittedly, other critics[116] have noted the essential theatricality of the play, but Masinton's observation that Barabas is "a kind of dramatic artist and scene-arranger" is a refreshingly novel interpretation. Because Masinton emphasizes the essentially dramatic nature of Barabas as an arranger of the scenes, he is able to explain quite easily the liberties Marlowe takes with Machiavelli's ideals.

According to Masinton, "since the Prologue tells us that he [Barabas] has the qualities of a Machiavel, we expect him to be an evil manipulator. And in a somewhat comical way he satisfies our expectations: Barabas manipulates all of the action of the play."[117] He terms Barabas a "perverse impressario" because, to Barabas, "the world's a stage and all its people merely players to be moved like pawns" to satisfy his vengeance or bring him power.[118] Masinton cites approvingly Ribner's suggestion that Barabas is a "pseudo-Machiavellian" who does not represent Machiavelli's thought accurately, noting that "the ironic point about him is ... Barabas is no true Machiavel and the control of crucial events eventually slips from his hands," but Masinton's theory departs from any further

[115] Masinton, "Marlowe's Artists: The Failure of Imagination," p. 31.

[116] For example, Henderson, Rowse, Craik and Fleay.

[117] Masinton, "Marlowe's Artists: The Failure of Imagination," p. 30.

[118] Ibid., p. 30.

similarity to Ribner's with his observation that Ferneze is "the real Machiavel of the play."[119] According to Masinton, Barabas is "at best only an amusing parody of the quiet, systematic, eventually triumphant Ferneze."[120] He points out that "it is his [Barabas'] inability to arrange his most important scene, in which the Turks are supposed to plunge through the trap door of the scaffold into the boiling cauldron ... that precipitates his tragedy," adding that,

> The scaffold itself—a raised platform or gallery whose false floor is operated by ropes, pulleys, levers and hinges—should be seen as a kind of dramatic stage on which the would-be director, Barabas, unwittingly plays the tragic part he has designed for the Turks. This entire scene (V.v.) then can be viewed as a sort of play-within-a-play, in which Barabas receives poetic justice through the inept handling of his art.[121]

Masinton sees the significance of the ending as:

> in the failure of Barabas' art of manipulation we find Marlowe's satiric message: it is not the Jew but the Christian who deserves our scorn, because he has triumphed by a supreme management of the Machiavellian art for which, ostensibly, the flamboyant theatrical Barabas should have been hated..., any concept of justice is mocked by Ferneze's cynical triumph.[122]

Masinton also sees that "the completely artificial nature of Barabas'

[119] Masinton, "Marlowe's Artists: The Failure of Imagination," p. 30.

[120] Ibid., p. 30.

[121] Ibid., p. 31. Masinton credits Neil Kleinman's work entitled "A Credible Stage: The Aesthetics of Politics" in Marlowe's The Jew of Malta: Grammar of Policy which appears in Midwest Monographs, Series 1, No. 2, Urbana, Ill., 1967 edition, for the idea of "play within a play."

[122] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

fall hints that only on stage is justice ever done; in actual political life the true Machiavellian politician goes unpunished—and often unrecognized."[123]

In spite of Masinton's failure to reconcile his theory that it is Marlowe's purpose to show that the "creative and inventive capabilities" of man are "irredeemably corrupt" with his belief that Ferneze is the triumphant true Machiavellian, his interpretation of Barabas as a pseudo-Machiavellian scene-arranger places a needed emphasis on the play's essential theatricality. Unlike those who discuss Machiavellian elements in the play, Masinton provides a provocative explanation of Marlowe's apparent misrepresentation of Machiavelli and Barabas' defeat at the end of the play.

In summary, then, the major assumptions of critics who perceive Barabas as a Machiavellian include: (1) the Elizabethans' perception of Machiavelli and his doctrines and principles was inaccurate and rested on Gentillet's prejudiced interpretation of Machiavelli's writings, and Barabas was a true representative of Machiavellian doctrines and principles as the Elizabethans perceived them (Meyer, Boyer, Praz, Henderson, Boas, Levin, Ribner and Van Fossen); (2) Barabas is the prototype for the Machiavellian villain-hero (Boyer and Praz); (3) Marlowe was aware that he was maligning Machiavelli when he created Barabas (Praz, Levin, Masinton and Ribner); (4) Barabas is no hypocrite, unlike the Christians (Ellis-Fermor and Henderson); (5) Barabas was driven to accept and employ Machiavellian

[123] Masinton, "Marlowe's Artists: The Failure of Imagination," p. 31.

tactics by the unjust behaviour of the Christians (Ellis-Fermor and Ribner); (6) Marlowe denounces Machiavellianism in the play (Ellis-Fermor, Ribner); (7) Machiavellian tactics prevail on all sides in the play (Ellis-Fermor, Ribner, Levin, Van Fossen, and Henderson); (8) Barabas represents the Machiavellian who is ultimately too clever for his own good (Levin); (9) Marlowe exploited Machiavellianism in the play for commercial reasons (Craik, Henderson and Rowse); and (10) Barabas is a pseudo-Machiavellian scene-arranger (Masinton).

The value of the large body of criticism on Barabas as a Machiavellian lies mainly in its contribution to an awareness of the complex issues involved in Barabas as a character and the play as a whole; its conclusive evidence that the Elizabethan conception of Machiavelli was distorted; its persuasive suggestion that Machiavellian principles are an important component of Barabas' character and the play as a whole; and its indication that moral issues may be of considerable importance in the play—a notion which other critics were to expand. In addition, as noted above, Masinton's view of Barabas as a pseudo-Machiavellian scene-arranger is valuable because it directs attention to the play's oft-overlooked theatricality.

The major shortcomings of the criticism include its attempt to label Barabas, which delimits him as a character and reduces the play, and—with the possible exception of Masinton's work—its failure to explore and satisfactorily explain the significance of (1) Marlowe's misrepresentation of Machiavelli, (2) the prevalence of Machiavellian elements on all sides in the play, and (3) the Christians' triumph and Barabas' defeat at the end of the play.

SECTION IV

ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL MORALITY

INTRODUCTION

To many critics, The Jew of Malta is a play which inculcates a moral lesson about political or theological matters. The work of these critics is seen to comprise four main groups: those who view the play as (1) a political morality; (2) an ambiguous morality; (3) a theological morality; and (4) both a political and a theological morality.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PLAY AS POLITICAL MORALITY

Battenhouse, Ellis-Fermor, Henderson, Mahood, Ribner

As can be seen in Chapter Eleven, many critics have dealt with the Machiavellian elements in the play, particularly in the character of Barabas. Of these critics, some believe that the play is a political morality whose purpose is to denounce Machiavellian doctrine and principles. According to these critics, because Barabas—as a representative of Machiavellianism—commits immoral, evil acts and is ultimately defeated; the moral of Marlowe's story is that Machiavellianism is: (1) deplorable, immoral and evil, and (2) ultimately ineffective and unsuccessful. Proponents of this theory include "H.M.," the author of "On The Jew of Malta;"[1] Una Ellis-Fermor;[2] Philip Henderson;[3] M.M. Mahood;[4] Irving Ribner[5] and Harry Levin.[6] As demonstrated,[7] such an hypothesis is inadequate because it

[1] See above, Chapter 11, p. 134.

[2] See above, Chapter 11, pp. 142-45.

[3] See above, Chapter 11, pp. 145-48.

[4] See above, Chapter 11, pp. 158-59.

[5] See above, Chapter 11, pp. 152-56.

[6] See above, Chapter 11, pp. 149-52.

[7] See above, Chapter 11.

overlooks the success of the Christians—who also employed Machiavellian tactics—at the end of the play.

Roy Battenhouse, who also believes that Marlowe denounces Machiavellianism in the play, contends that "Marlowe—like other moralists of his day—takes imaginative pleasure in advertising the odious character of this Italian-born 'atheism' [i.e., Machiavellianism]," insisting that "Marlowe belongs almost certainly in the camp with Gentillet" because "The Jew sets forth the Florentine's doctrines with typical Huguenot irony."[8] Battenhouse, however, makes no mention of the implications of the Christians' final success, nor does he support his theory with references to the text of the play. Instead, he refers to the character of the Guise in The Massacre at Paris, who, he says, is identified by Marlowe as a Machiavellian and who is also a murderer, hypocrite, traitor and papist. Battenhouse asks rhetorically "Can we suppose Marlowe rebel enough to have thought such action virtuous?"[9]—implying, of course, that if Marlowe depicts Machiavellianism in such an unfavourable light in one play, he is hardly likely to depict it favourably in another. Battenhouse's argument for the play as a political morality appears sensible and may be correct. It seems logical to abstract attitudes from one play, and to maintain that the author's ideas in another of his plays have been consistent. However, supporting a theory about one play by giving examples from another instead of supplying corrobora-

[8] Roy Battenhouse, Marlowe's "Tamburlaine": a Study in Renaissance Moral Philosophy (1941; rpt. with corrections, Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 1964), p. 206.

[9] Ibid., p. 207.

tive evidence from the text of the play in question, is not the most persuasive method of argumentation. It calls to mind the approach employed by many early critics,[10] who offered general commentary on Marlowe's main plays as a group, instead of analyzing each one separately. As shown, the above approach to the plays helped to generate an intensified focus on each play as an individual work. However, Battenhouse's study offers little insight into The Jew of Malta itself: his assumption, deriving as it does from a source external to the play, does not contribute to an understanding of the factors at work within the play.

[10] See above, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MORAL AMBIGUITY IN THE PLAY

Bevington, Fanta, Steane, Waith

Some writers, such as Charles G. Masinton, have recognized that the Christians in the play do not represent the forces of "good" as opposed to Barabas' "evil," and have noticed the consequent irony of the Christians' success at the end of the play. As noted, Masinton's explanation of the Christians' success is that Barabas is but a pseudo-Machiavel, and that Marlowe is showing that although true Machiavellians (the Christians in this case) are not always recognized as such, they ultimately triumph.[1] Several other critics, however, conceive of the play as a morality, and have concluded that the irony of the Christians' success indicates that the play's nature as a morality is one of paradox, doubleness or ambiguity.

David M. Bevington, for example, sees the play's conclusion as a "problem of moral ambiguity."[2] This ambiguity, Bevington contends, is the result of "the transference of a secular story into the structure of moral drama,"[3] and he believes that the "structure of

[1] See above, pp. 161-64.

[2] Bevington, p. 157.

[3] Ibid., p. 157.

vice 'tragedy' is clearly present in The Jew."[4] As Bevington sees it, the beginning of Marlowe's play follows the rules as well as the structure of the "vice 'tragedy,'" as "The prologue, spoken by Machiavel, is a conventional morality device heralding the appearance of the unregenerate protagonist," and

> The first dramatic vision of Barabas confirms the image of evil. He is clever, miserly, devoid of conscience. His love for his daughter Abigail proves to be merely an extension of his self-absorbed greed. His narrow charity excludes even the three brethren of his race.... [this is a] ... traditional exposition of the unredeemable worldling.[5]

According to Bevington, Marlowe temporarily breaks out of the mode of homiletic intrigue in arranging the scene in which Barabas' wealth is confiscated so that the "broadly human plight of Barabas" is made obvious; and despite the fact that "the Jew was actually a villain ... in the first scene [and] his later career of viciousness is simply a return to his original nature," nevertheless "The dramatist intended his audience to view his 'villain' for the moment at least, with genuine sympathy."[6]

Bevington points out that,

> The structure of the final act follows the inevitable conclusion of all homiletic "tragedy," descending lower and lower into an insane depravity that can only end in punishment for the protagonist and restoration of order for those who remain, [and] Barabas' farewell is that of the evil

[4] Bevington, p. 147.

[5] Ibid., p. 148.

[6] Ibid., pp. 150-51.

> genius in the moral play who aims at the annihilation of everything decent "underneath the sun."[7]

Bevington notes that, according to the "formula" of moral drama, the play

> must end in retribution.... [and] The final grouping of the governors and princes in Act V corresponds structurally not only to the avengers in morality drama but to the procession of "reward" personalities whose triumphs offset the defeat and punishment of the protagonist.[8]

However, he continues, "ambiguity commences, for according to the moral pattern, Barabas' enemies and future victims should represent the cause of virtue,"[9] but "Ferneze lacks the personal virtue to act as agent of God's righteous anger; and yet the moral framework of the play puts him in a position of doing just this."[10] Bevington concludes that,

> The play ends where it began, without the establishment of a moral order on Malta, but merely with the restoration of the expediency that has always been Ferneze's method of governing. His appeal to divine justice is a mockery.[11]

According to Bevington, "Marlowe's genius ... [could not] be forced into the restrictive mould of the homiletic drama."[12] He sees that Marlowe was unwilling to give in to the complete denunciation of Barabas which the homiletic mode called for: "Marlowe's

[7] Bevington, pp. 155-56.

[8] Ibid., p. 146.

[9] Ibid., p. 149.

[10] Ibid., p. 156.

[11] Ibid., p. 156.

[12] Ibid., p. 157.

interest in his protagonist is too deep for simple denunciation."[13] He goes on to say that Marlowe "reaches beyond the type to a particular person [in Barabas] and is seemingly less interested in moral example than in the intricate causality of human behaviour."[14] Bevington, however, fails to explain why Marlowe bothered to use the structure and many of the devices of the homiletic drama if he was more interested in the "causality of human behaviour" than in moral example. He does not explain why Marlowe would not have employed a structure more suited to his primary interest. Furthermore, one may speculate that by the term "causality of human behaviour" Bevington means that people, not another force, make things happen. Thus Marlowe is showing that his characters and their antagonists provoke the consequences of the play. However, Bevington actually does not state what he means by the term, nor does he explain Marlowe's use of this illusive "causality of human behaviour" in the play.

While Bevington's observations on the thematic difficulty of the Christians' triumph since they do not represent the opposite of Barabas' wickedness, and his conclusion that the play is morally ambiguous, are enlightening, his argument that the ambiguity is due to Marlowe's interest in "the causality of human behaviour" remains vague and unconvincing. While Bevington maintains that "Ultimately, Marlowe's world of chronicle is morally neutral" and that the play possesses a "characteristic ambiguity,"[15] he stops short of showing

[13] Bevington, p. 149.

[14] Ibid., p. 147.

[15] Ibid., pp. 157-58.

the consequences of ambiguity in the play. He demonstrates the workings of certain dramatic forces in the play, or of an overall attitude of the playwright, and does not offer a comprehensive interpretation of the play based on his observations.

Eugene Waith's view is similar to that of Bevington, in that he perceives certain puzzling, conflicting elements in the play. He proposes that these elements are evidence of Marlowe's "multiplicity of vision" and that Marlowe tries to balance "one view against another" in the play.[16]

Waith's main interest is in Marlowe's multiplicity of vision as it appears in Marlowe's handling of Barabas' character in the play. He points out that Marlowe offers different views of Barabas, first in the Prologue and then in the first act:

> The Machiavel, by proclaiming a highly unpopular point of view, damns in advance the hero to whom he is sympathetic. The avaricious Jew should in any case be anathema to a right-minded audience of the time, but especially so if he is also Machiavellian. It would seem that we know from the start how we must respond to Barabas. However, in the first scenes of the play, the representatives of Christian orthodoxy are so presented that the Machiavel's cynical view of the world seems almost justified.[17]

Waith draws attention to the puzzlement this handling of Barabas creates: "Is Barabas ... preferable to his enemies? The ironies of the presenter combine with the ironies of the play to form a tissue of contradictory attitudes."[18] Waith sees a further contradiction

[16] Eugene M. Waith, "Marlowe and the Jades of Asia," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 5 (1965), 229.

[17] Ibid., p. 236.

[18] Ibid., p. 236.

in Marlowe's handling of Barabas in that the reader or the audience is led to expect a stereotype as a result of the Prologue's discussion of Barabas, but the first speech in Act I "stamps the portrait of an individual on the stereotype."[19] He sees Marlowe as "manipulating" the character of Barabas so that at times Barabas appears as a stock-figure—"melodramatic villain or comic butt"—and at other times as an individual—"an aspiring and suffering man."[20] Waith insists, however, that as the play progresses "the individual begins to disappear into the stereotype," concluding that "In the latter part of the play, Barabas is almost completely the stereotype...."[21]

Waith asserts that the play is not completely successful in presenting a multiplicity of vision because at times "the contradictory attitudes ... seem ... to cancel each other out.... The obliqueness of presentation ... comes near to defeating its own ends."[22] As an example, Waith points out that, at the end of the play where Barabas drops into the cauldron, Marlowe fails because "Only Barabas' indomitable vitality remains to draw us to him, and that is not enough to balk applause and a heartless laugh," and that "Marlowe's shifting attitudes towards his protagonist ... seem at last to warp rather than add depth to the characterization."[23] While Waith's argument assumes that characterization of Barabas was Marlowe's consuming

19 Waith, p. 238.

20 Ibid., p. 235.

21 Ibid., pp. 238-39.

22 Ibid., p. 236.

23 Ibid., p. 239.

interest in the play, he does not offer proof to support this contention.

Waith's description of multiplicity of vision in the play is suggestive, but, like Bevington, he stops short of applying his observations towards a convincing interpretation of the play's meaning.

J.B. Steane points out that,

> Few plays have been given more names: tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, tragical-comical, farcical-satirical, "terribly serious," "tediously trivial"; "terrifying," it seems, cannot be too heavy a term, nor "absurd" too light.[24]

Steane believes that it is not necessary to assign the play a genre—"There is no real need to tidy it away into any particular dramatic category; some of these descriptions are more helpful than others, but probably none is definitive."[25] He does believe that the play should be seen primarily as a paradox because "Barabas is the most successful representative of a materialistic society which also victimizes and condemns him," and "The Establishment does eventually triumph over the Outsider [i.e., Barabas] in this play; but only because they can outdo the unscrupulousness for which they condemn him."[26]

Steane sees the play as concerned with the moral issues of the "Devil as hero,"[27] and he proposes that "Machiavel's Prologue itself sets the pattern of dramatic doublethink. It is a cunningly devised speech,"[28] the effect of which "is worth considering not only for

[24] Steane, p. 166.

[25] Ibid., p. 166.

[26] Ibid., pp. 168-69.

[27] Ibid., p. 172.

[28] Ibid., p. 173.

itself but because it presents in little the basic paradox of the whole play."[29] Steane sees this paradox as a "paradox of the 'good devil'.... he is the man you love to hate and hate to love."[30]

To Steane, the triumph of the Christians at the end of the play provides further testimony to the play's paradoxical nature, as, in the final scene,

> the play's characteristic doubleness is clearly focused.... If one at first sees a crude moral exemplum, good defeating evil, a second look finds the "good" nowhere to be seen; and if "crude theatrical knockabout" was a first diagnosis, elements of genuine tragedy mixed with some farce and much irony soon press foward to modify it drastically.[31]

As Steane would have it, Marlowe's purpose in creating paradox in the play is a moral one: he sees that "In The Jew of Malta one has to search hard to find any ... virtues in the world dramatised,"[32] and that "Marlowe is parading a debased humanity"[33] in the play. He contends that by using paradox in his drama, Marlowe points up the moral frailty and shortcomings of humanity in general; the Christians may have won in the end, but their methods are just as despicable as Barabas'.

Christopher G. Fanta also notes conflicting elements in The Jew of Malta. Like Bevington, Waith and Steane, he maintains that "Marlowe's tragic vision ... includes neither unambiguous condemna-

[29] Steane, p. 176.

[30] Ibid., p. 175.

[31] Ibid., p. 192.

[32] Ibid., p. 167.

[33] Ibid., p. 203.

tion of the protagonist nor the reintegration of the social structure after his fall."[34] According to Fanta, the play "conjures a kind of limbo of moral claims," and, like Steane, he believes that it also reveals "a vague sense of dissatisfaction with the fate of man."[35]

Fanta refers to Doctor Faustus, Tamburlaine and The Jew of Malta when he insists that "the moral content of Marlowe's plays remains perplexingly ambiguous."[36] Fanta goes beyond Bevington, Waith and Steane by showing how ambiguity relates meaningfully to (1) the deaths of the protagonists: "One reacts uncertainly, wavering between regard for the justice of their downfalls and a greater admiration for the grandeur of their ascents";[37] and (2) the "virtuous characters" in the play with whom, Fanta points out, "the reader ... is invited to identify" but who "have no prominence in [Marlowe's] plays."[38] Fanta implies that the conclusions remain ambiguous, but the doubts relate specifically to unsavory deeds. There must be an alternative, Marlowe would seem to say, even if none is offered.

Fanta mentions Bevington's argument that Marlowe's use of traditional homiletic structure to tell a secular story "imposes an ill-fitting moral lesson" and Fanta insists that although Bevington's argument is "compelling," nevertheless,

> ambiguity in the creation may also result from ambivalence in the creator, and one must inquire

[34] Fanta, p. 4.

[35] Ibid., p. 4.

[36] Ibid., p. 1.

[37] Ibid., p. 3.

[38] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

> whether rather than acting as a structural "trap," the forms of the plays give expression to a duality of outlook[39] and equally to a gradually developed pessimism.

Fanta thus asserts that, contrary to Bevington's suggestion that the play's ambiguity results from Marlowe's use of an inappropriate structure for the play, Marlowe intended to express his duality of outlook; the ambiguity is the result of Marlowe's own ambivalence.

Fanta seeks an understanding of Marlowe's duality of thought and pessimism in the minor characters. Although they are "monotone stick-figures, ... the key to exploring the less fiery side of his mind ... lies with a particular set of these minor characters: the handful of weak but virtuous persons who command his respect."[40] He points out that while Marlowe "repeatedly ... makes weakness ... the object of his caustic irony" and

> although they have no power or guile, Zenocrate and Olympia in Tamburlaine, Abigail in The Jew of Malta, Prince Edward in Edward II and the Old Man in Doctor Faustus are portrayed with a dignity which convinces us of Marlowe's attraction to them.[41]

He sees that "Two women, a young girl, a boy, and an old man—these are the exponents of Marlowe's gentler spirituality, the calm lake in the stormy tumult of his vision," concluding that, "Above all else, these five characters show 'simplicity' ... the exact opposite of Machiavellian policy."[42] Fanta insists that they have an important function in the play:

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[39] Fanta, pp. 6-7.

[40] Ibid., p. 7.

[41] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[42] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

> They qualify our vision of the overreacher and suggest something of Marlowe's own ambivalent attitude, for more and more radically in the sequence of the plays they challenge the means and the ends of the heroes' gigantic graspings....[43]

To Fanta, "They are 'agonists' in Marlowe's gallery of giant protagonists, innocent sufferers 'Doomed for a certain term to walk the night' of this earth's ruthlessness."[44]

Fanta goes on to say that in The Jew of Malta, "Marlowe is demonstrating ... exactly what is the 'worst' that unchecked policy can do" when he allows Barabas' pursuit of revenge to slip into villainy and his "Machiavellian policy [to run] wild except when challenged by more policy."[45] According to Fanta, Marlowe "probes the role, if any, of virtuous simplicity in such a world, as Abigail comes to perceive it to be, of loveless, pitiless and impious savages."[46] Fanta contends that,

> Within each play the effect of the contrast between the overreacher and the countercurrent minor figure may indicate a more or less deliberate effort by Marlowe to temper our conception of his protagonist, creating ambiguity as the expression of his own reservations, or perhaps, fears about the effort to exceed one's own humanity.[47]

Fanta suggests that Marlowe's growing pessimism is evident in the ending of The Jew of Malta:

[43] Fanta, p. 9.

[44] Ibid., p. 9.

[45] Ibid., p. 24.

[46] Ibid., p. 24.

[47] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

> After all the machinations of policy and twists of fate, the same corrupt, hypocritical governor remains securely in command of Malta, now with all its apparent enemies subdued. With Marlowe, as with most satirists, one of the greatest villains is the status quo, yet Marlowe gives the victory to the representative of the established order.... behind the ironically peaceful concluding lines lies the gloom of frustrated change.[48]

Fanta concludes that,

> Along with Marlowe's dream of the ability of a man to overreach the limitations of his society and to become, if only temporarily, more than a man, there resides ... an equally characteristic lack of faith that that overreacher can meaningfully bring change and new life to his society. And the hope embodied in Abigail's innocence was snuffed out, [because her life was snuffed out] before the beginning of Act IV.[49]

While Fanta's argument is itself compelling, and his conclusion that the play evinces duality of outlook and moral ambiguity has its convincing moments, there remains a softness in his argument. First, his discussion of the overreacher who wants to bring "change" and "new life" to society suggests that these are positive goals; but, in this discussion, he makes no mention of the villainy, greed and self-interest which characterize Barabas the overreacher, and he offers no explanation as to how these characteristics affect the goals.

Second, Fanta's assumption that the duality of outlook in the play reflects Marlowe's <u>own</u> duality of thought, his <u>own</u> struggle with the opposing natures represented by his protagonists and his "agonists" is, in fact, presumptuous. If Marlowe chose to expose dramatically a concept of duality of outlook, of moral ambiguity

[48] Fanta, p. 28.

[49] Ibid., p. 28.

The persuasive effect of Kocher's essay is similarly tempered by the fact that Kocher's comments on the play are generally limited to the first act: he has not attempted to offer an explanation of Barabas' actions in the rest of the play, nor has he commented on the play's ending.

Kocher believes that the Baines document contains the truth about Marlowe's religious beliefs[27] and he writes that "religion was the one thing in the world that Marlowe took most seriously."[28] He asserts that Marlowe "was bound to Christianity by the surest of chains—hatred mingled with reluctant longing, and fascination much akin to fear."[29] He also assumes that "His struggle with Christianity was, indeed, one of the purest fountains of his literary inspiration" and that "his plays show both a more extensive and a more profound knowledge of Christian doctrine than those of any other Elizabethan playwright, including Chapman" as "There are whole scenes in which scarcely a line does not contain some allusion to the Bible or to didactic and controversial literature."[30] Kocher concludes that Marlowe's gifts as a scholar and a satirist of religion are "of the highest order."[31]

While much of Kocher's perspective is enlightening, and well-

[27] See Paul H. Kocher, "Marlowe's Atheist Lecture," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 39 (1940), 98-106.

[28] Kocher, Christopher Marlowe: A Study of his Thought, Learning, and Character, p. 137.

[29] Ibid., p. 119.

[30] Ibid., p. 136.

[31] Ibid., p. 137.

supported by illustrations from the text, as for example, his claims about numerous Biblical allusions in the play, his argument is ultimately inadequate because it is based on an assumption about Marlowe's personal philosophy which is not necessarily true. Even if the Baines document were a true indication of Marlowe's theological beliefs (and there is considerable reason to suspect it is not[32]), Kocher has attempted to explain the play on the basis of what he perceives to be Marlowe's beliefs. Instead of adhering to the accepted method of literary analysis, i.e., drawing conclusions based on a close analysis of the text, Kocher has tried to make The Jew of Malta correspond with his own preconceived pattern, ignoring or glossing over elements within the play that do not fit the prescribed pattern; such as the irony of Marlowe's "siding" with a character who is obviously alienated from the audience's affections, the overreaching aspirations of Barabas, his yearning for revenge and his wicked deeds in the greater part of the play.

G.K. Hunter's work displays a more disciplined approach to literary analysis than that of Kocher in that he offers an extensive, well-researched and carefully documented analysis of the text of The Jew of Malta, while Kocher's hypotheses are derived mainly from unsubstantiated analogues or tenuous connections.

Hunter sees the play as a theological morality worked out within a structure of theological ideas and conventions. To Hunter, the play

[32] See Adams, pp. 1-18, for a discussion regarding the unreliability of the Baines document.

is, "apart from Faustus, the greatest ironic structure in Marlowe's work."[33] Like Paul Kocher, he believes that Marlowe was a "skilled theologian"[34] but, instead of basing this conclusion as Kocher has done, on the controversial Baines document, Hunter relies on evidence from the text and on testimony by John E. Bakeless who observed that Cambridge scholarships were

> tenable for three years, but if the candidates were disposed to enter holy orders they might be held for six ... [and] as Marlowe held his scholarship for six years, he must have been at least ostensibly preparing for the Church.[35]

Hunter sees that Marlowe reveals "a richly complex and ambivalent attitude to Christianity"[36] in the play.

According to Hunter, Barabas is a parody of the Biblical Job, and, because Job is very similar to Christ, Barabas is an Antichrist. Hunter assumes, moreover, that the Elizabethans would easily have made this connection and recognized Barabas as an Antichrist as well. Hunter contends that the First Jew's words in I.ii.184: "Yet, brother Barabas, remember Job" are, in fact, "cited in order to present Barabas as the opposite, as an Anti-Job, characterized by his impatience [author's emphasis], ... and choosing the road, not of Christian patience, but of its opposite, revenge."[37]

[33] G.K. Hunter, "The Theology of Marlowe's The Jew of Malta," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, 27 (1964), 182.

[34] Ibid., p. 182.

[35] Ibid., p. 182.

[36] Ibid., p. 218.

[37] Ibid., p. 190.

Barabas' Jewishness, Hunter goes on to say, would have been perceived by the Elizabethans as a moral and religious issue, not as a racial one as many modern-day writers have supposed.[38] He points out that "The whole Elizabethan frame of reference discouraged racial thinking,"[39] and a Jew was a person who chose not to accept Christianity as a creed and therefore was an outsider: not a racial outsider, but a religious outsider, one who chose his fate. Hunter presumes further significance in Barabas' Jewishness: he insists that, to the Elizabethan way of thinking, the Jew was always "wicked" because he was a Jew in the theological sense; that is, he did not embrace Christianity. Barabas was thus condemned from the beginning of the play, regardless of whether he committed immoral acts in the last part of the play, simply because he was a Jew. "[F]or the theological status of the Jew, typified by the name Barabas, was fixed and immutable until he ceased to be a Jew."[40] Consequently, Hunter contends that in the play "there is no reversal of general attitude: the Jew who descends to the cauldron in Act V has the same status as the Jew who counts his money in Act I, though ... there are plenty of counter-currents throughout."[41] To Hunter, this disproves "the usual critical attitude" that Marlowe "has sympathetically identified himself with the powerful and magnetic alien figure" in the

[38] See Hunter, pp. 184-86.

[39] Hunter, pp. 185-86.

[40] Ibid., p. 186.

[41] Ibid., p. 186.

first part of the play and "later loses interest."[42]

Hunter sees another theological parody in Barabas' treasure. Barabas' material treasure of jewels, gold, and so forth, he says, is meant to reflect the spiritual treasure of Christ. He builds an elaborate case for the theological motif of Christ as treasure, and for the Virgin's womb as a "little room" which contained "infinite riches" (i.e., Christ), and Hunter claims that Barabas' famous line "Infinite riches in a little room" should be interpreted in part as a parody of this theological motif.[43] He points out that the Jews were perceived as representing desire for treasure in material objects, not in spirit, as Judas sold Christ for silver and the Jews valued the life of Barabas the criminal, more than that of Jesus the preacher.

The cauldron, Hunter notes, was generally understood by Elizabethans to represent Hell—"A cauldron was, in fact, a traditional image of hell"[44]—and Barabas as Antichrist therefore met an appropriate end.

Moreover, according to Hunter, Marlowe's choice of Malta as the setting for his play is a fact that supports the theory of the play as a theological morality, because:

> In placing his Jew in Malta, at the time when Malta was menaced by Turkish attacks, Marlowe is not choosing place and time at random. For here was one of

[42] Hunter, p. 186.

[43] See Hunter, pp. 194-98. See also pp. 191-93 for Hunter's theory that the line may also indicate that Barabas' wealth represents "spiritual hunger for the infinite."

[44] Hunter, p. 210.

> the decisive struggles of Marlowe's age, a struggle not simply between nations (operating by "policy") but between faiths, between virtue and iniquity, God and the devil. Such at least was the common European attitude....[45]

He also notes that "Marlowe seems to have chosen his world of men, as he chose his place, to raise highest expectations of rectitude" because the Knights of Malta were historically "monastic soldiers vowed to poverty, chastity and obedience."[46] He sees that Marlowe deliberately chose this particular world of men, "only to reveal the more effectively his view of man's ... essentially fallen condition," as "In the actual life of the play, the heroic conflict of the Crescent and the Cross, with its idealistic rhetoric of honour and piety, is only a window dressing, behind which, on both sides, lies the reality of greed ... 'Desire of gold.'"[47]

Hunter concludes that Marlowe, in dramatizing theological ideas, does not necessarily condemn Christianity as a doctrine (which, he says, many critics have suggested), but rather, Marlowe condemns the behaviour of many Christians. As Hunter would have it, Marlowe is demonstrating that the motive "desire of gold" (avarice) is ignoble and completely inconsistent with Christian theological doctrines, but that Christians and, in fact, "most men," Christian or not, are motivated by "desire of gold."[48] As evidence that it is Christian behaviour rather than Christian doctrine that Marlowe attacks in the

[45] Hunter, pp. 202-03.

[46] Ibid., p. 203.

[47] Ibid., p. 203.

[48] Ibid., pp. 203-04.

play, Hunter draws the reader's attention to Ferneze's words in I.ii.102-103: "And better one want for a common good,/Than many perish for a private man," and the First Knight's words in the same scene, line 113: "'Tis not our fault." Whereas to Paul Kocher the scene's purpose is merely to identify Barabas as an Antichrist, Hunter believes that its purpose is to associate Ferneze and the Christians with Pontius Pilate and the Chief Priest Caiaphas who condemned Christ and, in condemning him, betrayed him. Hunter notes:

> though Barabas is the opposite of Christ, his trial is conducted by figures who approximate to Pilate and the Chief Priest.... and throughout the scene the gap between Christian doctrine and Christian behaviour is emphasized.[49]

Hunter continues:

> Marlowe's purpose is not to justify the Jew [who is an Antichrist], but to belabour the Christian. The belabouring is, however, ... concentrated on Christendom's betrayal of Christ, rather than on doctrine itself. Christianity's pretensions cannot be justified by the behaviour of its adherents, but this is not to say that it cannot be justified at all.[50]

In conclusion, Hunter says, the play

> is strongly built upon a stratum of orthodox theological attitudes; its heterodoxes and perversities take a savage delight to show how inapplicable these attitudes are to the political or commercial ambitions of most men; but the satire is as strong against "most men" as against Christianity.[51]

If there is distortion in Hunter's overview, it lies in the aspects of the play which he has not fully explored: for example, the overreaching ambitions of Barabas (although it could be argued

[49] Hunter, p. 212.

[50] Ibid., p. 217.

[51] Ibid., p. 218.

that Hunter has considered this aspect in reaching the conclusion that "Marlowe's interest seems to be rather in the contrast between a fabulous degree of wealth and a spiritual sterility, which, throughout the play, cries out for satisfaction and is not answered"[52]; or the connections between political events of the day and certain political allusions in the play; or the significance of theatrical elements (which Hunter does recognize in the cauldron scene) in the play as a whole.

The efforts of James H. Sims constitute more a footnote to Hunter's work than an independent study. Sims is indebted to Hunter's conclusions about the use of Biblical allusion in the play, and he particularly credits Hunter for discoveries of similarities between The Jew of Malta and Doctor Faustus. However, Sims is more interested in simply exploring how Biblical allusion is used in the play, than (as Hunter is) in interpreting the play's meaning based on these discoveries. Sims expands on Hunter's discoveries concerning Biblical allusion, and reaches the conclusion that Biblical allusion in the play involves a reversal of roles, a "looking-glass view"[53] of Biblical events and people. He insists that "Biblical allusions ... form a consistent pattern"[54] in both Doctor Faustus and The Jew of Malta. According to Sims, Marlowe provides a "rear-view mirror glance at conventional ideas and beliefs ... by the use and abuse of

[52] Hunter, p. 193.

[53] James H. Sims, Dramatic Uses of Biblical Allusions in Marlowe and Shakespeare, Univ. of Florida Monographs, Humanities No. 24 (Gainesville, Florida: Univ. of Florida Press, 1966), p. 19.

[54] Ibid., p. 15.

Scripture,"[55] and through this method "a reversal of conventional conceptions is accomplished."[56] He goes on to say that Marlowe accomplishes this "rear-view mirror effect" by using three types of reversals: "the reversal of roles, the reversal of values and the reversal of meaning."[57]

Sims explains that the "reversal of roles occurs when words spoken by or of a righteous person (usually Christ) in the Bible are associated in the play with a wicked person (Mephistopheles, Faustus and Barabas especially)."[58] He points out that even if the full significance of the words would be grasped only by those in the audience able to recognize the context of the allusion, most of the audience would have known the references and "The reversal of roles, therefore, though the audience in many instances may not have consciously analyzed what was wrong, could hardly have failed to produce a sharp sense of something badly out of frame."[59]

Like Hunter, he sees a connection between Barabas and Job, and Barabas and Christ. He writes that "Marlowe reverses roles between Barabas and Job, and ... between Barabas and Christ."[60] Sims explains how role-reversal makes Barabas an Antichrist: "A Biblical

[55] Sims, p. 15.

[56] Ibid., p. 28.

[57] Ibid., p. 16.

[58] Ibid., p. 16.

[59] Ibid., p. 16.

[60] Ibid., p. 18.

allusion casts Barabas in Christ's role early in the play,"[61] and he refers to the words of Ferneze in I.ii.100-104. Like Hunter and Kocher, he asserts that the speech is reminiscent of the meeting involving the High Priest Caiaphas in which the decision to condemn Jesus was taken. Hunter sees that the passage is significant mainly because it implies that the play's Christians, as represented by Ferneze and the First Knight who are no virtuous Christians but the equivalent of the betrayers of Christ—Caiaphas and Pilate, have betrayed true Christianity.[62] Sims, on the other hand, like Kocher, believes the significance of the passage lies mainly in its implication that Barabas is to be seen as a reversal of Christ:

> Here is a looking-glass view indeed: the Jewish high priest becomes the Christian governor of Malta, and the founder of Christianity, a Jew himself of course, becomes the rich Jew Barabas, named for the criminal released by Pilate instead of Jesus.[63]

Sims also contends that Barabas' words in the passage about righteousness is a paraphrase of

> a passage in Isaiah often regarded as a Messianic prophecy ... (Isa. 33:15-16a) ... [and] the question which Barabas asks at the close of the speech ... paraphrases Christ's words to the Pharisees "Whiche of you can rebuke me of sinne?" (John 8:46).[64]

While Hunter believes that the passage's primary purpose is to point out the difference between righteousness earned and righteousness given by Grace (in belief and trust in Christ), Kocher sees that it

[61] Sims, p. 19.

[62] See above, pp. 194-95.

[63] Sims, p. 19.

[64] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

is to criticize the doctrine of original sin. Sims, however, perceives that its main purpose is to emphasize the reversal of roles between Barabas and Christ. "Barabas implies that the doctrine of man's depravity does not apply to him as it did not apply to Christ."[65] It is a pity that Sims does not expand on this idea, as Barabas' claims about his being "fram'd of finer mould than common men" (I.ii.224) may have a similar significance.

According to Sims,

> A second type of Biblical allusion in Marlowe reverses values.... In The Jew of Malta Barabas undergoes no spiritual struggles over the reversal of values [as Sims says Faustus does]; he seems at ease with values already reversed.[66]

As an example of the reversal of values and Barabas' ease with the reversal, Sims cites the passage containing Barabas' words, "Now will I show myself to have more of the serpent than the dove; that is, more knave than fool." (II.iii.36-37). He maintains that Christ, in Matthew 10:16, "intended the serpent and the dove as figures of two qualities, different but both good, to be balanced by Christians as they faced the hostility of the world," but that,

> To Barabas, schooled in the Machiavellian art of dissimulation, it seems better to be wickedly wise than innocently (in the sense of "harmlessly") foolish: to him the advice to be both wise and harmless is nonsense.[67]

Consequently, as Sims would have it, "The words of Jesus are perverted so that both the serpent and the dove figure become, in

[65] Sims, p. 20.

[66] Ibid., p. 21.

[67] Ibid., p. 21.

Barabas' words, symbols of something bad."[68]

As another example of Marlowe's reversal of values in the play, Sims refers to Barabas' words concerning Lodowick and Abigail: "ere he shall have her,/I'll sacrifice her on a pile of wood" (II.iii. 53-54). To Sims, this is another Biblical allusion, as, in this passage, Marlowe

> alludes to the offering up of Isaac, Abraham's only son.... the important differences [between Barabas' words and Abraham's deed] concern the motivations of Abraham and Barabas. Abraham's was an act of faithful obedience to God's command and of spiritual devotion to God. For the moral value of love of God superseding the love of child, Barabas substitutes love of hate and revenge superseding the love of child.[69]

Sims concludes:

> A villain who accompanies his villainy by allusion to Holy Writ in which he has reversed the values, substituting natural scheming for supernatural providence, knavery for wisdom, and blind obedience to impulses of hate for obedience to God becomes, especially to an audience acquainted with the Scriptures, the child of Hell.[70]

According to Sims, a third use is made of Biblical allusion in the play, as Marlowe "reverses not only a value but the whole meaning of the original passage."[71] As an example of the "reversal of meaning," he cites Barabas' comment that Abigail, because she turned sincerely to Christianity, should be cursed by him, "Like Cain by Adam for his brother's death" (III.iv.33). Sims points out that

[68] Sims, p. 21.

[69] Ibid., p. 22.

[70] Ibid., p. 22.

[71] Ibid., p. 23.

it was God, not Adam, who actually placed a curse on Cain, and that God provided for Cain's protection from death by violent means in spite of the curse. He concludes that Barabas has perverted "the story of God's mercy even in judgment to a story of a father's vengeful curse,"[72] which, he says, Barabas uses to justify his eventual murder of Abigail and the other nuns.

In addition to his observations about reversals in The Jew of Malta, Sims, in a footnote to his own work, offers a tantalizing theory of the origin of Abigail's name. He contends that she

> has the name and character of the attractive wife of the churlish Nabal who was smitten dead by God. Unlike Marlowe's Abigail, the Biblical heroine enjoyed a happy ending as the bride of David (I Samuel 25).[73]

Sims unfortunately provides no elaboration. Had he pursued this idea he might have discovered a link between Abigail and Christ, as Jesus was born of David's line.

Much of Faustus' and Barabas' "complexity and power as dramatic characters as well as much of the success of the plays in which they appear," according to Sims, is due to "the Marlovian looking-glass method of viewing Scripture, through which a reversal of conventional conceptions is accomplished and an additional force given to the dramatic statements."[74] Unfortunately, he does not explain precisely what the "dramatic statements" consist of, nor does he describe their significance in the play as a whole: he does not tell us what "statements" Marlowe is making in The Jew of Malta. Similarly, while

[72] Sims, p. 23.

[73] Ibid., p. 22, n. 10.

[74] Ibid., p. 28.

Sims' theory that the play offers a looking-glass view of the Scriptures is suggestive, he does not explain the significance of the "looking-glass method of viewing Scripture" in the play as a whole, and he fails to indicate how Marlowe's "reversal of conventional conceptions" is to be interpreted. Like Bevington and Waith,[75] Sims is more interested in demonstrating the workings of dramatic elements within the play than in applying his observations to a conclusive interpretation of the play's meaning.

To summarize the major trends and assumptions in criticism concerning theological elements in the play, one should note that: (1) most sixteenth and seventeenth century critics believe that Marlowe was an atheist and that the play reflects his atheistic point of view; (2) eighteenth and nineteenth century criticism is characterized by controversy concerning Marlowe's theological opinions, and some writers (such as Cibber, Baker, Warton, Lamb and Hazlitt) question the atheistic label applied to the dramatist; and (3) most twentieth century writers believe that Marlowe was critical of certain theological matters in his time, and some of these critics see the play as a theological morality. The main assumptions of those who view the play as a theological morality include: (1) Marlowe denounces Roman Catholicism in the play (Van der Spek); (2) Marlowe criticizes the life and principles of Christians—both Roman Catholic and Protestant—in the play (Kocher); (3) Marlowe uses Barabas as a tool to show the deficiencies of Christianity (Kocher); (4) Marlowe uses Biblical allusion in the play to (a) point up the deficiencies

[75] See above, pp. 170-76.

of Christianity (Kocher), (b) show the incongruities between Christian doctrine and Christian behaviour (Hunter), and (c) provide a looking-glass view of Biblical events and people through a reversal of roles, values and meanings in the play (Sims); (5) the play is worked out within an ironic structure of theological ideas and conventions (Hunter); (6) Marlowe is a skilled theologian (Kocher, Hunter, Sims); (7) Barabas is a parody of Job and thus an Antichrist (Hunter, Sims); and (8) in The Jew of Malta, Marlowe is demonstrating that "desire of gold" is not consistent with Christian theological doctrines (Hunter).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE PLAY AS POLITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL MORALITY

Charles G. Masinton

Charles G. Masinton's fourth chapter "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed" in his book Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study in Damnation, constitutes a fairly convincing synthesis of many of the theories discussed in Chapter Thirteen and Chapter Fourteen. Masinton sees the play as both a political and a theological morality.

He argues that Barabas is not

> a genuine disciple of [Machiavelli] because, for one thing, Machiavelli's principles apply only to the running of a state or government (the area of endeavor in which Ferneze successfully employs them), but Barabas concentrates on matters that relate to his own personal affairs.[1]

As previously discussed,[2] Masinton believes that Barabas' character "combines elements of the Vice-figure from the morality tradition, the Senecan villain-hero, and the misinformed popular conception of the Machiavellian man, but he remains only a pseudo-Machiavellian cul-

[1] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 62.

[2] See above, pp. 161-64.

prit."[3] He believes that this

> distinction [is] worth noting, for if Barabas receives poetic justice for the enormities he commits, Ferneze's cynical triumph over the honorable Turks and his return to absolute power at the end mock the basic notion of justice in the drama.[4]

Masinton concludes that Marlowe is thus making the "disturbing point that in the world of the play, which reflects the actual world of men, the most efficient Machiavel survives the longest and may enjoy the high regard of his compatriots too."[5] Like Ellis-Fermor, Henderson, Battenhouse, Mahood and Ribner, Masinton believes that "The dominant motif of The Jew of Malta [is] ... political treachery and the rewards it brings."[6]

Masinton sees the lines in the Prologue "I crave but this,—grace him as he deserves, /And let him not be entertain'd the worse/Because he favours me" (lines 33-35), as Marlowe's way of alerting the reader or audience to "Marlowe's ironic intention with regard to his protagonist,"[7] as Bevington, Steane and Waith have also pointed out.

According to Masinton, the play was of historical interest to the Elizabethan audience:

> The Jew's business empire would have been quite appealing to many in the audience who were themselves engaged in commercial enterprises connected

[3] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 62.

[4] Ibid., p. 62.

[5] Ibid., p. 62.

[6] Ibid., p. 63.

[7] Ibid., p. 64.

> with sea trade.... The acquisitive instinct that characterizes Barabas is essentially no different from the impulse that motivated loyal Englishmen to establish lucrative markets all over the globe,[8]

and the play "was written only a year or two after the celebrated defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, an event that marked ... the beginning of England's most exciting era of exploration, colonization and trading."[9] Masinton goes on to say:

> the play, then, reflects the dynamic and aggressive spirit underlying the economic expansion of Elizabethan England, but it does so ironically. For though the accumulation of wealth appears early in Act I to have its heroic side, Marlowe quickly goes on to dramatize the cruelty and insincerity of people who give themselves wholly to the pursuit of money.[10]

Masinton concludes that it was Marlowe's purpose to point out the immorality of the way of life pursued by the Maltese.

Masinton, like Fanta, contends that Abigail is significant in the play. He believes she "represents the moral virtues that [Barabas] hates and wilfully perverts through his greed and revenge" and that "Abigail ... allows herself to be used by her father, whose malevolence thereby overwhelms the goodness she embodies."[11] As Masinton would have it, when Barabas chooses Ithamore as "his 'second self' [III.iv.15] and 'only heir' [III.iv.43] he totally nullifies the

[8] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 66.

[9] Ibid., p. 67.

[10] Ibid., p. 67.

[11] Ibid., p. 72.

graceful, human qualities she stands for (innocence, selflessness, and gentleness) and replaces them with the evil characteristics of his diabolical slave."[12] Fanta speaks of the "countercurrent minor figure" (who could, in Marlowe's plays, be either male or female) who acts to "temper our conception of [Marlowe's] protagonist, creating ambiguity."[13] Masinton, however, speaks of "the woman (or girl) he [the protagonist] either should or does love" whose "separation" from the protagonist is "closely associated with the loss of his soul to the powers of evil."[14] Thus, to Fanta Abigail represents a minor figure who acts to create ambiguity, but to Masinton she represents a beloved female whose loss indicates damnation for the protagonist.

Like Hunter, Masinton maintains that Barabas was, in fact, damned from the beginning of the play; and, like Hunter and Sims he believes that Barabas is an Antichrist representing the forces of Hell. To Masinton, Barabas "possesses in abundance the most characteristic traits found in Malta—vengefulness, avarice and perfidy. But he is different from the other citizens in being consciously and openly allied with the powers of hell,"[15] and he goes on to say that Barabas, in his words about the serpent and the dove (II.iii.36-37), "blas-

[12] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 72.

[13] Fanta, pp. 9-10.

[14] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," pp. 72-73.

[15] Ibid., p. 74.

phemously parodies Christ's advice to the Apostles in Matt. 10:16."[16] Masinton also points out that the "money [Barabas] has hoarded in his house ... lies hidden beneath a board marked with the sign of the cross,"[17] which, he says, is another indication that Barabas is to be perceived as an Antichrist. Masinton refers to Barabas' speech in II.i.50-57 (when Abigail has thrown him his treasure) as "a profane yet ridiculous parody of divine worship and religious ecstasy," and his contention that,

> this speech proceeds from the Jew's inverted religious sense: instead of loving God, he worships gold; and instead of seeking to cultivate Abigail's admirable traits, he exhibits an insane materialism. For him ... the lord that governs men and requires their service comes not from heaven but the underworld,[18]

is reminiscent of Sims' theory of reversals in the play.

Masinton refers to Ithamore's words to Barabas in III.iv.59-60 "he that eats with the devil had need of a long spoon; I have brought you a ladle," claiming that these words reveal Ithamore's "diabolical nature" and disclose his "true identity"[19] as the Devil. While Masinton is correct in assuming that the passage serves as another indication that Barabas is to be associated with the powers of hell, Ithamore's words may mean simply that Barabas is in close communion with the Devil; the words do not necessarily imply that Ithamore is

[16] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 74.

[17] Ibid., p. 74.

[18] Ibid., p. 75.

[19] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

calling himself the Devil.

Masinton's argument reflects those of Hunter and Sims in yet another way. He maintains that, "Although the Christians do not acknowledge an evil deity, their actions are as important as those of the Jew and his slave in showing that the normal heirarchy of moral and religious values is completely reversed in the play."[20] According to Masinton, the exchange between Ferneze and Basso in III.v.2-4, in which Ferneze asks "What wind drives you thus into Malta-road?" and Basso answers "The wind that bloweth all the world besides,/Desire of gold," does, in fact, "illuminate much of the action of the play [as] .... 'Desire of gold' motivates both Barabas and the Christians from the beginning."[21] Masinton insists that Ferneze and the Christians are to be equally as disdained as Barabas:

> Although he publicly gives credit to God for his success [at the end of the play], Ferneze has won by means of his unscrupulous "policie," by his mastery of the difficult art of political sleight-of-hand. And therein lies the greatest irony of the play: The Jew of Malta is, on one level, "The tragedy of a Jew" as Machiavel informs us (Prol. 30); but it is also ... a satire against the shameless cant, religious prejudice and affected virtue of the Christians. Marlowe ... shows that the religiosity of the Jew's antagonists only disguises their Machiavellian style of life.[22]

[20] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 75.

[21] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[22] Ibid., p. 85.

While most of Masinton's conclusions owe more to the works previously mentioned in this section than to his own independent insights about the play; and while he does not offer such carefully documented analysis and provocative insights into the theological elements of the play as does G.K. Hunter, nevertheless, Masinton's conclusions about The Jew of Malta are more comprehensive than those contained in any single work by the writers from whom he has borrowed. To Masinton, "The animosity and virulent religious prejudice (to say nothing of the insatiable greed) that govern the lives of the Maltese reveal a nightmarish moral disfiguration and social disorder in the world on stage."[23] Marlowe, Masinton says, intends this disfiguration and disorder to reflect the "large measure of gross, irreducible human corruption ... represented" in the "revolutionary developments" which included "empirical thinking, the new ethic of power, and the growth of capitalistic enterprise,"[24] prevalent during Marlowe's time. According to Masinton, it is Marlowe's intention to point out that the "reorganization of man's fundamental approach to politics, the arts, commerce and the gathering of knowledge held as many dangers as benefits for society and the indivdual."[25] He contends that in The Jew of Malta,

> traditional political arrangements and established religious forms no longer guide human behavior,

[23] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 77.

[24] Ibid., p. 77.

[25] Ibid., p. 77.

> but have been perverted and replaced by an uninhibited avarice, a monstrous hunger for power, and an all but officially sanctioned dedication to "policie" that spread their evil effects with the speed of an epidemic.[26]

Masinton concludes that Marlowe uses The Jew of Malta to demonstrate the possible consequences of the "reorganization of man's fundamental approach [es] " based largely on "desire of gold." Masinton thus perceives the play as a morality on the level of personal motivations and actions (it is "the tragedy of a Jew"), politics, and theology. Marlowe's purpose, as Masinton would have it, is to present a world in which the social and religious values are reversed in order to point out the immorality of these reversals. As such, Masinton's work synthesizes theories and suggestions of previous writers, to produce a more or less comprehensive interpretation of the play.

[26] Masinton, "Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," p. 77.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE PLAY AS POLITICAL SATIRE

Eleanor G. Clark

In a detailed study entitled Ralegh and Marlowe: A Study in Elizabethan Fustian, Eleanor G. Clark claims that The Jew of Malta is a satire of King Philip II of Spain and particularly of his attempts to make a politically advantageous nuptial match for his daughter Isabella, the Infanta.

A thorough investigation of the accuracy of Clark's claim is beyond the scope of this thesis. The topic would demand an inquiry into the political pamphleteering phenomenon in Elizabethan England (to which Clark makes extensive reference), and also to Spanish history as it affected England—all of which would constitute a thesis in itself. Nevertheless, a review of The Jew of Malta criticism would be incomplete without reference to Clark's theory, since, due to her exhaustive research and the impressively large amount of painstaking evidence she has gathered and recorded, Clark's argument provides a different dimension for interpretation of the play.

Clark maintains that the play was written in the "same spirit" of "rollicking satire"[1] as a French work entitled Menipée de la

[1] Eleanor G. Clark, Ralegh and Marlowe: A Study in Elizabethan Fustian (1941; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1965), p. 448.

Vertu au Catholicism d'Espagne et de la Term des Etats de Paris, published in Paris in 1593, which "was the joint production of a group of ex-Catholics, chiefly lawyers, and is a rowdy satire upon the assembly of the States at Paris when they met for the purpose of electing a successor to the Cardinal-King."[2] The Jew of Malta, according to Clark, is the same kind of

> rollicking satire, combining fierceness with fun and, happily, in proportions that leave the fun far in the lead.... This is not the Tragedy of the Jew of Malta, but, in the most classic sense of the words, a Satiric Comedy, and, so far as I know, the best example of it in the English language [author's emphasis].[3]

She believes that most Jew of Malta critics have been too "heavy-gaited" to see the "rich, comic vein in much of the so-called romantic ecstasy of Marlowe's protagonists," and that, "In calling it a farce, ... T.S. Eliot came nearer the spirit of The Jew of Malta than anyone has; but it is more than a farce."[4] Clark asserts that "the real prototypes [of the play] were the Spanish King and his cruelly exploited daughter."[5]

"[N]o inference," Clark states, "is here made as to an actual literary relationship between [the Menipée and The Jew of Malta]. The ... date makes this highly improbable. They merely represent satirical treatments of the Spanish King and his confréres of the

[2] E.G. Clark, p. 439.

[3] Ibid., p. 448.

[4] Ibid., pp. 448-49.

[5] Ibid., p. 450.

Holy League; ... but the parallels are often ... close."[6]

Clark explains the various elements within the play which indicate the connection between The Jew of Malta and Philip II of Spain. She maintains that the choice of Malta as the setting for the play is significant because of its association with Spain and its parallels with Philip's exploits:

> The choice of Malta for his [Marlowe's] fustian scene of action is explicable on several grounds: (1) Malta was a Spanish dependency, and, during the years of the Holy League, especially identified with ... Guisans ... (2) Malta had recently [1565] been through a famous siege ... [and] (3) the adventures of David Passi [thought by many to be a prototype of Barabas] in Malta were suggestive of Philip's shameless infidelities to his religious position for the sake of a politically advantageous marriage for the Infanta.[7]

Clark also points out that the names "Fernese," "Martin del Bosco" and "Matthias" which are used in the play, were names of figures in Philip II's Spanish entourage.[8] For further evidence that Philip II was to be associated with the play, she cites the reference to Spanish fleets in the play and Barabas' use of the Spanish language when he is alone, agreeing with Tucker Brooke that Spanish "falls oddly from the lips of this Maltese Jew."[9] She asserts, moreover, that the oaths Barabas uses "are not only Spanish ... but Spanish Catholic: 'Corpo di Dio!'"[10]

[6] E.G. Clark, p. 459.

[7] Ibid., pp. 450-51.

[8] Ibid., pp. 451-52.

[9] Ibid., p. 452.

[10] Ibid., p. 452.

The above indications that Philip II was to be associated with the play, Clark continues, "are mere identification tags, catch-names to give one the key to the gloss," because:

> It is in the characterization of the Jew that the parallel is worked out so completely as to be inescapable to one familiar with the tenor of anti-Spanish pamphleteering of the last decade of the sixteenth century in France and in England.[11]

According to her hypothesis, "The character of Barabas is the Protestant idea of the character of Philip."[12] Clark refers to the situation in the play whereby

> The dishonourable citizens of Malta, who make treaties with the Turks and break them "on principle" because they are "heretics," force Barabas to give them money, and Barabas consents outwardly; but secretly he schemes to outwit them all by selling Abigail now to one suitor, now to another.[13]

According to Clark, this situation parallels Philip's use of his daughter, and she notes that "Isabelle ... was, by the way, 'A fair young maid, scarce fourteen years of age' (as Mathias says of Abigail) when she was first offered to [Queen] Mary's son, James."[14] While one could put forth an argument against Clark's theory based on the premise that Barabas did not "consent outwardly" to the theft of his wealth (he objected strenuously and, as a result, Ferneze confiscated what he thought was the whole of Barabas' fortune instead of half), and that Barabas' "selling" of Abigail was a

[11] E.G. Clark, p. 452.

[12] Ibid., p. 452.

[13] Ibid., p. 452.

[14] Ibid., p. 452.

sham (he did not intend to allow either suitor to have her), these differences seem relatively minor. Clark herself cautions "against pressing too far for details" in the parallel between Barabas and Philip.[15] She points out that Barabas does not represent Philip with total accuracy as "Philip did not end his days in a boiling cauldron" the way Barabas did.[16] The cauldron scene is "fustian and represent[s] an attitude on the part of the author and the audience, not a fact of history," and it should be remembered, Clark cautions, that "The facts are, indeed, hopelessly jumbled in the fiction."[17]

As further evidence that Marlowe intends Barabas to represent Philip, Clark notes that the play makes Barabas a poisoner, and "as English students know from the charges against Philip in the case of Don Antonio of Portugal as early as 1586, his [Philip's] reputation as a poisoner was well established."[18] Clark insists that "The whole parallel is extremely apt, especially when we note that Barabas forces Abigail to pretend a false religion 'for policy,'"[19] a reference to I.ii.283-387.

Clark adds that the political pamphlets "picture Philip as reeking with wealth.... So Barabas regards his wealth with an appalling greed."[20] She attests to the insincerity of Philip "the Most Catholic

[15] E.G. Clark, p. 458.

[16] Ibid., p. 458.

[17] Ibid., p. 458.

[18] Ibid., p. 453.

[19] Ibid., p. 453.

[20] Ibid., p. 454.

King" in proclaiming that rulers must "purge their domains of heresy, yet, while persecuting the Huguenots, they tolerate the Jews and the Turks and the Moors, not only in Malta ... but in Spain, France and the Low Countries as well."[21] This insincerity, Clark goes on to say, is reflected in the play:

> the officers make and break treaties with the Turks, sell the Moors as slaves, mistreat the Jews, but tolerate their presence and their heresy for the sake of the gold they bring into whatever realms they inhabit. How modern it all sounds![22]

Clark notes that,

> Like the Philip of the anti-Spanish pamphlets, Barabas has been the cause of civil strife within the city; he has set family against family, friend against friend, religious houses against each other.[23]

She concludes that "The parallel is complete."[24]

Clark's theory fails to mention what many critics have perceived to be a difference in tone between the first two acts and the last three: is Marlowe implying, for example, that Philip was noble at first and degenerated morally as his career progressed? or was Philip damned from the beginning, etcetera?

Clark's theory also does not account for the ironic elements of the Christians' triumph at the end of the play, and the ironic elements in the Christians' behaviour—so painstakingly described by critics such as Hunter and Sims—throughout the play; nor does it

[21] E.G. Clark, p. 454.

[22] Ibid., p. 454.

[23] Ibid., p. 458.

[24] Ibid., p. 458.

explain the frequent use of Biblical allusions and reversals in the play.

Clark's hypothesis is provocative and it seems likely that Marlowe did intend to satirize Philip of Spain. However, one cannot accept that the production of a "Satiric Comedy" having Philip as its butt was Marlowe's sole intention in The Jew of Malta. Several important elements in the play would remain unaccounted for. Nevertheless, there appears to be no necessity for the source to square exactly with the play, or for the source to explain away all the significant cruxes in the play. Discarding (1) tenuous allegations regarding intention, and (2) departures (for artistic reasons) from a real life source, the parallels between the life of Philip II of Spain and the career of Barabas as presented in The Jew of Malta do provide an illuminating frame of reference concerning the type of play we have before us. Source studies can often point up the tone and genre of an illusive and perplexing work. And even if Clark is totally wrong and there is no relationship between The Jew of Malta and King Philip II of Spain, the results of her study remain a helpfully suggestive guide to an appropriate stance for the reader or viewer of the play.

SECTION V

THEATRICAL ELEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Whatever may be disputable about The Jew of Malta, the fact remains that it was a popular play. More theatrical productions of The Jew of Malta are recorded in Henslowe's Diary than of any other play of the time.[1] While there is an unfortunate tendency in much early criticism to limit analysis of the play to remarks concerning its theatrical success and the "evil" character of the Jew, there is an equally regretable proclivity in later criticism to downplay, if not to ignore completely, the play's popular success in Elizabethan England. One may lament the tentative, overly general and incomplete nature of remarks about the play offered by earlier critics, but one may equally regret that many later writers neglected to consider the implications of its immense popularity. The popularity of The Jew of Malta indicates that, for at least one age, the performed play possessed considerable appeal. In spite of the Elizabethans' occasional derogatory remarks about its quality as literature, as theatre the play was well received by the same audience that cheered Hamlet and Othello. The current studies, while concentrating on decoding the

[1] See Lee, p. 146, and Fleay, pp. 94-116.

the play's character and on assigning it a suitable generic mode, largely ignore the vitality and theatricality of The Jew of Malta implicit in the play's immediate popularity. At least it was favourably judged by an audience readily acquainted with the recognized classics of the English stage.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE PLAY AS THEATRE

Bradbrook, Craik, Harbage, Hillier, Knoll, Thorndike

Twentieth century critics who have assessed the play's theatricality include Robert E. Knoll, Thomas W. Craik, Ashley H. Thorndike, M. C. Bradbrook, Alfred Harbage, Richard L. Hillier, John Russell Brown and Harry Levin.

Robert E. Knoll sees that the play's inconsistent tone is in part redeemed by its theatricality. He assigns a brilliant plot structure as the primary cause of the play's theatrical success: "In tone ... The Jew of Malta is a jumble, but its overall plotting is brilliantly conceived for theatrical effect."[1] Knoll, like many earlier writers, believes that Marlowe was primarily interested in commercial success and that he was in a hurry "to exploit the fame he had recently won with Tamburlaine."[2] As previously mentioned,[3] Knoll, while noting that some critics believe that the play breaks down "thematically and dramatically at the end of Act II,"[4] insists that there is reason to

[1] Knoll, p. 93.

[2] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

[3] See above, pp. 63-64.

[4] Knoll, p. 98.

believe the play does not break down after Act II. Knoll maintains that "Although the tempo of the action increases in Act III, Marlowe's careful attention to general structure and his carelessness in detail are what we have seen before. Indeed, all the action of the later parts ... [has] been carefully anticipated.... "[5] Knoll stresses the essential theatricality of the play:

> In the first scene Marlowe goes to some lengths to establish the fact that Barabas is the cleverest, the most unscrupulous, the richest and therefore the most powerful merchant in Christendom. This having been made clear, all the major plots ... can be introduced by the end of Scene ii ... the Turkish threat ... the Maltese determination to force the Jews to pay ... Barabas' daughter ... the lascivious friars ... Lodowick and Mathias.... This first act is a model of exposition and preliminary suspense, for no detail is introduced that does not lead directly to subsequent action.[6]

Knoll contends that while there is no breakdown in the play, the play is divided into two equal parts:

> The first section ends with Act III, scene iii, the climax of the play—up to this point Barabas has held the initiative. Thereafter he goes on the defensive, responding ingeniously to challenge but starting nothing; only in Act V, scenes ii and iii, does he again manage the action.[7]

Noting that "Act I is the most carefully sustained section of the whole play, for in it theme, action and tone are most fully matched," Knoll insists that,

> The incidents of the play are arranged so that what happens in the first half prepares for what

[5] Knoll, p. 98.

[6] Ibid., p. 96.

[7] Ibid., p. 94.

> happens in the second; and as is common in well-made plays, the action comes full circle.[8]

According to Knoll, "after Act I of The Jew stage action is introduced for its own sake, for the delight of the moment ... ."[9] because "When Marlowe wrote The Jew of Malta, he had not yet outgrown a rather adolescent desire to shock his audience with cynical views of Christianity and with staged violence."[10] Knoll goes on to say that "The motives and reactions in The Jew are not thoroughly consistent."[11] As an example, he notes that,

> within fifty lines [Barabas] has [degenerated into] ... a Punch and Judy puppet ... clasping in ludicrous rapture the bags of gold thrown to him by his daughter.... The tone is startlingly inconsistent....[12]

To Knoll, the play's "characters are not psychologically of a piece" and "the implications of individual passages are [not] fully considered."[13] He concludes that,

> Indeed, Marlowe sustains no single unifying attitude throughout the whole play. As a result, contrary to what T.S. Eliot says, the play is not everywhere "terribly serious" nor always very "savage," but is rather, sensational comedy which sometimes touches deeper notes.[14]

Pointing to such theatrical techniques as the farcical tricks (Barabas' killing of the friar); the farcical reversals (Barabas' triumph

[8] Knoll, p. 94.

[9] Ibid., p. 97.

[10] Ibid., p. 93.

[11] Ibid., p. 93.

[12] Ibid., p. 97.

[13] Ibid., p. 97.

[14] Ibid., p. 93.

over a new set of opponents: Bellamira and Ithamore); the use of disguises and parody (Ithamore's love speeches, which Knoll describes as "parodies of conventional love addresses") in Act IV; Knoll insists that "Act IV is dramaturgically among the most brilliant sections of the play, but it is as uneven in tone as the rest."[15] To Knoll, the play's artistic shortcomings do not impede its dramatic success. Unlike the majority of modern critics who collectively have discovered a variety of "meanings" in Marlowe's play, Knoll believes that "The potentially tragic situations in [the play] are ... treated summarily or comically and what might have had significance is glossed over. The tone remains uncertain."[16] As Knoll would have it, "Throughout the play Marlowe seems to have been satisfied to construct a theatrical entertainment and to explore its meaning only erratically."[17] Knoll's interpretation of the play is best summarized by his own words: the play, he says, "is not of a piece; it is calculated entertainment and we must not overread it."[18]

T.W. Craik, like Knoll, believes that "The Jew of Malta is essentially a play for the theatre, and it is in the theatre that it must be judged."[19] He too sees that "Plot is more important than anything else in The Jew of Malta," adding that "Barabas' own character is itself important largely because of his vitality, his energy,

[15] Knoll, p. 99.

[16] Ibid., p. 98.

[17] Ibid., p. 98.

[18] Ibid., p. 102.

[19] Craik, p. xviii.

in contriving and superintending this forward-driving action."[20] As shown above, Knoll denies that Marlowe intended any significant message be derived from the play, and he contends that the play was intended as very little more than pure entertainment. Craik also considers it necessary to insist that Marlowe had no main interests in writing the play other than those of a dramatic (in the sense of "entertainment") nature: "The play is essentially neither propagandist nor moralistic, but dramatic."[21] According to Craik, "Moral questions [in the play] are not seriously discussed: they are ironically touched upon and left. If moral questions were an important element, the play's interest might be expected to reside as much in the characters as in the plot, but it does not."[22] This hypothesis invites skepticism on several grounds. First, it assumes that the use of irony does not or cannot achieve the same results as "serious discussion" in a literary work—an assumption that it is not necessarily true. Second, Craik does not indicate precisely what he means by "interest in the characters." Third, he offers no proof that the play's interest does not "reside as much in the characters as in the plot." Indeed, he fails to explain why, if "the play's interest" does not "reside as much in the characters as in the plot," the character of Barabas is such a dominant and intriguing force in the play. Fourth, Craik does not give any explanation as to why "the play's interest might be expected to reside as much in

[20] Craik, p. xiv.

[21] Ibid., p. xiv.

[22] Ibid., p. xiv.

the characters" in order to show that "moral questions were an important element" in the play. He does not explain why interest in the characters is necessary before it can be concluded that moral questions are important. One might argue that situations can create and/or arouse moral questions just as easily as details of character can. In addition, it must be noted that the case for the presence of moral questions in the play has been convincingly argued by many critics who have presented substantial evidence to support their tenets.[23]

Although Craik and Knoll laud the theatrical elements of the play and Marlowe's skill in creating a stage-worthy and entertaining work, they believe that the play has few, if any, merits as literature. Marlowe's purpose, according to Craik and Knoll, was not to create good literature but rather to please audiences with good entertainment. Ashley H. Thorndike, on the other hand, believes that the play serves both purposes well. Thorndike maintains that Elizabethan dramatists, including Marlowe, had a "double purpose" in their plays, which was "to please their audiences and to create literature."[24] As previously mentioned,[25] a host of critics assume that in The Jew of Malta Marlowe is primarily interested in creating popular theatre at the expense of good literature—either intentionally (Marlowe is writing for commercial gain, not for artistic ful-

[23] See above, Section IV, Chapters 12-16, pp. 167-218.

[24] Ashley H. Thorndike, Tragedy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1908), p. 98.

[25] For example, see above, pp. 49-50, for the views of Luce and Woodberry, and pp. 58-59 for the views of Rowse.

fillment or expression), or unintentionally (Marlowe intended to combine commercial and artistic interests, but, in actuality, fails in his artistic endeavours). Thorndike, however, does not see these purposes in Elizabethan drama generally and in Marlowe's plays particularly, as antagonistic or self-defeating, but as complementary and, at least in The Jew of Malta, as successfully combined. According to Thorndike, "The spectacle, bombast and horrors, the new and startling stories of Marlowe's plays were certainly intended to win his public" but "they probably caused no twinges to his artistic conscience."[26] Thorndike asserts that,

> the study of character, the underlying conceptions, the maturing power of structure, as well as the beauty and wisdom of separate passages, reveal a mind of intellectual and emotional profundity seeking to give noble expression to the things in life that impressed him most vividly.[27]

Observing that stage effects and spectacles are also important in Doctor Faustus and Tamburlaine,[28] Thorndike states that Marlowe's primary theatrical achievement in The Jew of Malta is the "display of plots and atrocities which the plays of the next thirty years strove in vain to surpass."[29] He contends that it is important to recognize Marlowe's "contributions to the purely theatrical side of the drama,"[30] as well as his significant contributions to poetry and an understanding of tragedy as "not the presentation of history, myth, or events

[26] Thorndike, p. 98.

[27] Ibid., p. 99.

[28] Ibid., see pp. 97-98.

[29] Ibid., p. 98.

[30] Ibid., p. 97.

of any sort, but the presentation of the passionate struggle and pitiful defeat of an extraordinary human being."[31]

Thorndike thus views The Jew of Malta as a successful blend of Marlowe's commercial, theatrical and artistic interests.

M.C. Bradbrook argues for the presence of poetic and dramatic interests in the play. It has been previously noted that Bradbrook believes that, as a result of Kyd's influence, Marlowe's style of writing changed and he developed a "new technique,"[32] which appears in its embryonic stages in The Jew of Malta. She maintains that Marlowe makes a "substitution of a technique of action for a technique of verse"[33] in the second part of the play. According to Bradbrook,

> the first part of the play is ... concerned only with the mind of the hero: Barabas' actions are comparatively unimportant. In the last part of the play actions supply nearly all the interest: there is an attempt to make the narrative exciting in itself, to connect the various episodes casually and consecutively to produce something of a story. This is the technique of that very different play, Edward II.[34]

Bradbrook concludes that "The last half of the play shows an interest in stage situations and the manipulation of the narrative."[35] Her main point is that Marlowe's technique and style were developing and changing in this play towards the style of writing used in Edward II. While she does not elaborate on this technique as it appears in The Jew of Malta, it is clear that Bradbrook has recognized, at least

[31] Thorndike, p. 96.

[32] See above, pp. 61-62.

[33] Bradbrook, p. 122.

[34] Ibid., p. 120.

[35] Ibid., p. 122.

in the second part of the play, that Marlowe was aware of the theatrical aspect of the play and the play's poetic elements.

Although Alfred Harbage's comments focus on philosophical and moral elements in the play, his discussion ultimately illuminates the dramatic nature of the play. Indeed, his argument is that in The Jew of Malta Marlowe had no real interest other than theatrical entertainment of his audience. I have included in this chapter the main points of Harbage's commentary in an attempt to show that while his proposals concerning the essentially dramatic nature of the play are perceptive, Harbage, like many other critics who discuss the play's theatricality, is hasty in discounting the possibility of other interests in the play.

According to Harbage, T.S. Eliot's description of The Jew of Malta as a "'farce of the old English humour, the terribly serious, even savage comic humour, the humour which spent its last breath on the decadent genius of Dickens' ... set the pitch for modern Marlovian criticism,"[36] but he believes that Eliot was mistaken in his judgment. He points out that, in Eliot's essay,

> No light is shed on what the farce is terribly serious about, or in what sense the word "decadent" is used, or if it applies to the genius of Marlowe as well as to that of Dickens.[37]

Harbage offers a somewhat derisive summary of how critics since Eliot have perceived Marlowe's play as "terribly serious" and "cut to a standard pattern,"[38] which he describes as one in which the critics believe that,

[36] Harbage, p. 47.

[37] Ibid., p. 47.

[38] Ibid., p. 48.

> there is more in Marlowe than meets the eye; His plays form a sequence of interrelated power probes in the cold war of the glorious one against the inglorious many [author's emphasis]. Their [Marlowe's plays'] prevailing mode is ironic. In seeming to castigate sin, in the persons of titanic sinners, Marlowe is really castigating naïve popular notions of sin. The true object of his "savage" humor is the conventional morality of the herd.[39]

As Harbage would have it, this view of the play is not accurate, although it "is in harmony with the modern temper, and with the doctrine that good citizens make bad poets since all true art is revolutionary."[40] He continues in the same scoffing tone: "It is presumably fortified by what the critics think they know about Marlowe's life."[41]

Harbage disagrees with the opinion that Marlowe intended to show that the world of Malta was wicked and that Ferneze and the Christians were just as evil as Barabas. He claims that such a conclusion is the result of seeing the play from a modern point of view, and that, from the perspective of an Elizabethan audience, Malta would not have seemed wicked and Ferneze's actions would have seemed righteous:

> Ferneze extracts large fines from Barabas and his co-religionists, but in a society like London's, where men had recently been burned for being the wrong kind of Christians, no one would have been shocked by a society like Malta's where men were fined for being Jews. Ferneze provides a choice: any Jew who becomes a Christian will share the Christian immunity from fine; otherwise he will pay half his estate. The offer would have seemed not only just but generous.[42]

[39] Harbage, p. 48.

[40] Ibid., p. 48.

[41] Ibid., p. 48.

[42] Ibid., p. 52.

While Harbage's point is sensible, it raises the question of whether the multitude of Elizabethans were capable of understanding the difference between expediency and morality. Ferneze's actions might have been perceived as correct in terms of logic and expedience, but were they also perceived as morally right, or did the Elizabethans recognize the moral question in the situation? In modern times, actions are taken which are often generally approved on the grounds of expedience, but which are also questioned on ethical or moral grounds by some people. The point is that the incident of Ferneze's fining the Jews raises philosophical questions, and philosophical questions are timeless, age-less. It is a mistake to patronize, as Harbage does, the people of an age by assuming that none of them would recognize a philosophical question when it is presented to them.

The same argument could be put forth in response to Harbage's contention that,

> All of the estate of Barabas is confiscated when he proves momentarily defiant, but this does not mean that Ferneze is portrayed as tyrannical. The penalty was named in the original stipulation, and although Barabas immediately recants, he must pay the penalty. The Elizabethans loved these illogical "legalisms"—contracts so literally interpreted that all parties are stymied.[43]

Certainly, the Elizabethans may have "loved" these "legalisms," and Harbage may be correct in suggesting that they would have posed no moral crux for the Elizabethans. However, it does not follow that the Elizabethans would have detected no philosophical or moral implications in the situation. One does not necessarily have to be per-

[43] Harbage, p. 52.

sonally or sympathetically involved in a morally questionable situation in order to recognize that such a situation exists.

Harbage's reasoning leads him to the conclusion that "the world of Malta is not depicted as wicked at all. In fact, ..., Ferneze would have been greeted by an Elizabethan audience with warm moral approval. That we cannot endorse this approval is beside the point."[44] In addition to the question of whether the Elizabethans would have been able to recognize philosophical issues, one must add, to refute Harbage's argument, that it is difficult to imagine that Elizabethan audiences would have been sufficiently naïve to have failed to recognize the fact of the Christians' double-dealing and treachery in the play. Even if one does not accept E.G. Clark's theory of the play as a rollicking satire of Philip of Spain's endeavours, one must remember the many examples she provided of the numerous satirical political pamphlets produced by the Elizabethans. The fact that such pamphlets were common certainly indicates that the Elizabethans were interested in political events and aware of the double-dealing and treachery which characterized many of these activities. A number of studies based on the assumption that the Elizabethans would have recognized the ironic elements in the Christians' behaviour[45] would tend to disparage Harbage's notion that the Elizabethans would have greeted Ferneze's actions with "warm moral approval."

[44] Harbage, p. 52.

[45] See Section IV above, pp. 167-218.

Harbage maintains, furthermore, that Marlowe "was not (because he was temperamentally disqualified) either a 'Satanist' or an adept at portraying corruption."[46] Barabas is not a decadent character, Harbage says, because,

> Although an expert casuist and liar and a marvellously ingenious contriver, the end-product of his [Barabas'] villainy is more notable for quantity than quality. His competence extends only to means, not to ways of sinning [author's emphasis]. He kills people in heaps, but is most remiss in administering mental and physical agony.
> .....
> The whole book of sexual criminality is closed to Barabas.... [in fact:] There are in Marlowe's play some naughty quips, usually involving the interest of the friars in the nuns, but they are few in number and faint in impact.... The heady combination of lust and bloodshed, eroticism cum the macabre does not appear in The Jew of Malta or elsewhere in Marlowe.[47]

About Barabas, Harbage continues: "But observe the limitations of this monster of wickedness. He stacks up heaps of wealth ... and he kills people. That about covers it."[48] Harbage refers to the monstrous ways of killing people as exemplified in Marston's Antonio's Revenge, Tourneur's Revenger's Tragedy, Webster's White Devil and "a score of similar plays,"[49] to emphasize that Barabas is not truly a decadent killer, nor Marlowe a possessor of decadent genius. To Harbage,

[46] Harbage, p. 50.

[47] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

[48] Ibid., p. 54.

[49] Ibid., p. 55.

> The truth is that Barabas (and that means Marlowe, since the latter necessarily "identified" with his central character and thought as "wickedly" as he could) is essentially innocent-minded,

and he continues that "The actual language of the play, the poetry [author's emphasis]... provides the best proof of the fact."[50] He cites Marlowe's opening address in which Barabas speaks of his jewels and wealth, and Volpone's, to point out that Barabas' speech expresses beauty and aspiration, while Volpone's expresses perversion, blasphemy and corruption. Harbage goes on to say:

> Considering the fact that Barabas had just been introduced to the audience by "Machevil" (and we should not be oblivious to the pun) as the incarnation of evil, it would have been appropriate if his opening speech had something of the flavour of Volpone's. Why does it not? The reason, I think, is that Marlowe's mind did not run naturally in evil channels, that he had little imaginative affinity with corruption; and whereas he could invent a limited repertory of wicked things for a Barabas to do, he could not imagine the appropriate things for such a doer to think [author's emphasis].[51]

Harbage's argument about the innocence of Barabas and Marlowe must be criticized for at least two reasons. First, the assumption that Marlowe "necessarily identified" with Barabas calls to mind the oft-committed mistake of linking a character to the author. Second, if one follows Harbage's line of reasoning, Webster, Marston, Tourneur and even Shakespeare (whom Harbage does not mention but who should be included because he wrote the horror-studded Titus Andronicus) should have been evil-minded, corrupt individuals who likely commit-

[50] Harbage, pp. 56-57.

[51] Ibid., p. 57.

ted atrocities and then wrote about them. This notion, of course, is absurd, and it is unlikely that Harbage actually proposes that Marlowe, because he harboured the thoughts of Barabas, was one with the direction these thoughts might take. However, it must be pointed out that Harbage's conclusion does not withstand close scrutiny as the same reasoning that leads Harbage to conclude that Barabas is essentially innocent-minded because Marlowe himself is uncorrupted, leads equally well to the clearly unlikely conclusion that if Barabas were truly decadent, Marlowe himself must have been corrupt and evil-minded too.

Having, as he thinks, convinced his readers that Marlowe was not an iconoclast, that both he and Barabas were essentially innocent and that Marlowe did not intend to condemn all of Malta; Harbage offers his interpretation of the play's purpose:

> Granted that Marlowe is more interested in the morally black Barabas than in his morally neutral or mixed milieu, what is the nature of the interest? I should say that it is primarily that of a popular entertainer; and that we shall get nearer the truth about the play if we ourselves are less "terribly serious" about it, and think a little less in terms of moral philosophy and a little more in terms of native sports. There was bear-baiting, bull-baiting, and, their theatrical equivalent, devil-baiting.[52]

Harbage elaborates on his theory of The Jew of Malta as an exercise in devil-baiting:

> Behind the latter [devil-baiting] lies a long tradition ... [including] the "Vice" figures of the interludes.... The appeal was primarily comic.... In Marlowe's play the devil is baited

[52] Harbage, p. 53.

> in the form of a Machiavellian Jew.... Marlowe is not mocking the popular audience in The Jew of Malta, but conspiring hand and glove with it. He supplied the best devil-figure thus far conceived—in his agile-minded arrogant, ruthless, lethal Barabas.[53]

As it is with the work of Craik and Knoll, it is unfortunate that Harbage considered it necessary to try to prove that Marlowe's only intention in The Jew of Malta was to entertain, for Harbage's point about the "native sports" and "devil-baiting" proves a helpful perspective and, as has been demonstrated in this paper, it is more than likely that Marlowe intended his play to entertain; but it does not necessarily follow that this was his sole intention. Harbage correctly points out that the play "is studded with plot devices and verbal routines (double-talk, cross-purpose dialogue, patterned interruption, satirical asides, etc.) which passed on as models to later playwrights."[54] He concludes that the play's "theatrical mastery, its showmanship, is the most remarkable thing about this play [author's emphasis]."[55] While one might question the validity of Harbage's other observations about the play, and argue that theatrical mastery or showmanship is perhaps not the "most" important aspect of the play; one must agree that it is, at the very least, "remarkable."

The work of Richard L. Hillier, while concerned with Marlowe's poetry rather than his drama, contributes to a study of the theatri-

[53] Harbage, p. 53.

[54] Ibid., p. 50.

[55] Ibid., pp. 49-50.

cality of The Jew of Malta because it calls attention to theatrical elements in the poetry itself. Hillier discusses Marlowe's use of imagery to create spectacular effects:

> The more violent aspects of the lust for power are suggested by the numerous images representative of fury, violence, wrath and the desire for vengeance, the aftermaths of tragic disappointment. Most of these are couched in bloody and fiery language. Wrath and courage are kindled in the hearts of several characters, especially Barabas, who is possessed of a zeal so savagely burning that it is enough to consume a house.[56]

The reader of the above description notices that Marlowe's poetry, with its vibrant, forceful images "couched in bloody and fiery language," creates such spectacular effects as are inherent to theatre.

The theatre tries to make a small space suggest the world and beyond. In the theatre, the playwright's task is to explore the significance and/or meaning of reality: the goal of theatre is to make the stage (a small space) suggest reality (the world) and its significance or meaning (beyond). A study of The Jew of Malta in the light of this goal produces intriguing results which help to illuminate the nature of the play. The play's motif of "Infinite riches in a little room"—so frequently discussed by critics[57]—is, in actuality, a summation of theatre. The notion suggested by this motif, that is, of containing the uncontainable, is the task of all

[56] Richard L. Hillier, "The Imagery of Color, Light and Darkness in the Poetry of Christopher Marlowe," Elizabethan Studies and Other Essays in Honour of George F. Reynolds, University of Colorado Studies, Series B, Studies in the Humanities, Vol. II, No. 4 (Boulder: Univ. of Colorado Press, 1945), 118.

[57] See above, for example: pp. 118-19, 128-30, etcetera.

theatre. That this particular motif should be clearly visible in the play is a further indication of the play's theatrical nature. Hillier points out that,

> the mannerism that both restricted Marlowe's scope and elevated his imagery to its zenith is his tendency to create expansive figures, amazing skyscapes seen through a pin-hole, tight buds that, opening slowly, as if photographed by a slow-motion camera, nevertheless burst into flambent blossoms. Thus evolves Marlowe's glorious descriptions of the heavens, mirrors of human passion.[58]

In considering the above description of the power and suggestiveness of Marlowe's verse, one sees that the ability to "create expansive figures, amazing skyscapes seen through a pin-hole"—to create, in a word, "Infinite riches in a little room"—is the essence of theatre which tries to make a small space suggest the world and beyond.

Marlowe's ability to create theatre or spectacle is thus not limited to his choice of form, plot and stage devices, but extends—and is in fact—inherent to the poetry itself.

[58] Hillier, p. 125.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE PLAY AS THEATRE CONTINUED, WITH A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

Artaud, Brown, Levin

Of those who have assessed the play's theatricality, most have contended that there are no real interests in The Jew of Malta other than entertaining the audience; that is, theatricality, at least in this play, is virtually synonymous with good, light entertainment. While the helpful perceptivity of those who have identified the essentially dramatic nature of the play has been recognized in this essay, the frailties within discussions which try to prove that the play has no interests other than theatricality (in the sense of entertainment) have been duly noted. Although some critics have seen that theatrical elements are important in the play, the significance of these elements has not yet been satisfactorily explored or explained. However, studies of the play's theatricality by John Russell Brown and Harry Levin, when considered alongside certain proposals concerning the nature of theatre put forth by Antonin Artaud, suggest that theatricality in The Jew of Malta is not simply "light entertainment" but is something sufficiently expansive to allow for the existence of other interests in the play. Such an interpretation of theatricality is helpful to an understanding of the play as a whole.

While admitting that the temptation to view Marlowe's plays as "spectacles" is very great, Brown insists that one should not yield to the temptation but should, instead, perceive the plays as "shows." The modern understanding of "spectacles," he says, involves "cinéramic extravagance"[1] without controls or intellectual and artistic restraint. In contrast, according to Brown, Marlowe's plays must be described as "'shows,' a then fashionable word implying a highly developed Renaissance art in which thematic significance was the organizing principle."[2] Brown gives a well-substantiated argument for intellectual control and restraint in the words and actions of Marlowe's plays. He points out that although Marlowe wrote before Shakespeare, we read him afterwards and in his light, and we make the mistake of staging Marlowe using theatres, talents and techniques designed for Shakespeare's kind of dramatic action and characterization. Brown maintains that "a careful dissociation is necessary before reading and performing Marlowe for his own sake."[3] He describes Edward Alleyn's style of acting, a style which came to be associated first with Tamburlaine and later with The Jew of Malta and other of Marlowe's plays, as: "violent, stalking, astounding acting," which "by 1600 was considered out of date."[4] Brown notes that this style was, however, extravagantly praised at the time, and was

[1] John Russell Brown, "Marlowe and the Actors," Tulane Drama Review, 8, 4 (1964), 162-63.

[2] Ibid., p. 163.

[3] Ibid., p. 155.

[4] Ibid., p. 156.

actually appropriate to Marlowe's plays and should have been retained:

> Marlowe wrote his plays for acting that was "violent, stalking, astounding," and also strong, clear, galvanic. It was a style ... for plays that are visual as well as intellectual, physical and metaphysical, responsible and popular. It was a style for this kind of theatre; and it was something of its own, for Marlowe was an original [author's emphasis].[5]

Brown's hypothesis that Marlowe's plays are "visual as well as intellectual, physical and metaphysical, responsible and popular," is explicit in his argument for artistic control in Marlowe's plays. To Brown, Marlowe's arguments and comparisons are not "so nimbly" and "intricately" developed as Shakespeare's, but they are not without careful planning and control:

> he [Marlowe] preferred to build, to progress by marked degrees, retaining each element within the final large impression. Tamburlaine, Gaveston, Edward, Faustus, Barabas are all presented this way. Barabas can tell his life-story phase by phase, to give a definite, forceful impression (II.iii.179-197) [Barabas' speech to Ithamore, beginning "As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights"]. He argues by independent statements and questions....[6]

Brown cites Barabas' response to Abigail in I.ii.264-279, beginning "My gold, my gold, and all my wealth is gone!" and ending "We ought to make bar of no policy," as an example of how Marlowe "progress[es] by marked degrees, retaining each element within the final large impression" to reveal the "lively, self-contained mind"[7] of Barabas. "In this passage the progress of his [Barabas'] thought is clear,"

[5] Brown, p. 157.

[6] Ibid., p. 159.

[7] Ibid., p. 159.

Brown insists, and he continues: "This kind of elaboration is as minutely controlled as Kyd's or Shakespeare's."[8]

Brown also maintains that "The intellectual life of Marlowe's dialogue is clearly shown in his use of single lines.... [The]... sharpness—dramatic corners boldly turned in a line or two—gives edge to the dialogue and suggests a kinetic, a reserved power."[9] As an illustration, Brown cites the words of Tamburlaine: "Not for the world Zenocrate, if I have sworn:/Come bring in the Turk;" and he notes that the technique "is well fitted to the asides of Barabas in his dealings with Christians and Jews...."[10] Brown concludes that Marlowe's "attempt to give an impression of actual thought and feeling" in a speech "must usually be looked for in the design of his speeches, in the contrasts between their various elements."[11]

About the visual effect of Marlowe's plays, Brown writes:

> While words fill the mind on reading one of Marlowe's plays, in performance its visual effects can dominate the verbal. There are opportunities for spectacle ... parades and processions, coronations and funerals, pursuits, battles and horrors, are found variously in every play. But again, here is a trap for modern actors and directors: this is not an open invitation to cineramic extravagance.[12]

Brown admits that the temptation is attractive, but "as with the

[8] Brown, p. 159.

[9] Ibid., p. 160.

[10] Ibid., p. 160.

[11] Ibid., p. 162.

[12] Ibid., pp. 162-63.

words, indulgence is dangerous."[13] Concerning interpretations which emphasize spectacle—a full, crowded stage, constant action, etc.—Brown remarks that "a[n] ... important objection [to such interpretations] is that Marlowe did not speak of 'spectacles' but of 'shows'"[14] in both Tamburlaine and Doctor Faustus. Brown sees that the frequent reference to "shows" in Marlowe's works implies that his plays were intended to be "shows" themselves. Fortunately, Brown provides more persuasive evidence than simply a word count. He points out, for example, that "For Marlowe both words and actions were important," noting (like Harry Levin) that Marlowe "was sometimes content with action and no words at crucial moments of his drama: Helen, who ravishes Faustus and 'sucks forth' his soul, only passes over the stage in silence."[15] Marlowe, according to Brown, "is an intellectual dramatist"[16] in whose plays "some of the importance of show and gesture is symbolic, in the tradition of allegorical drama."[17] Brown gives as an example the figure of the Old Man in Doctor Faustus, but cites nothing from The Jew of Malta, although mention of Abigail (who represents "goodness") or even the fiery cauldron (which represents Hell) would have been appropriate to his argument. Brown adds that Marlowe "used the reliance on visual impressions [not only] for dramatic purposes which are not always allegorical," but sometimes for

[13] Brown, p. 163.

[14] Ibid., p. 163.

[15] Ibid., p. 164.

[16] Ibid., p. 163.

[17] Ibid., p. 164.

"defining the progress of the action" or "forming a constant support or foil to the words."[18] While Brown presents no illustrations from The Jew of Malta to clarify his meaning, one might assume that when he claims that "visual impressions" are used to "define the progress of the action," he might be referring, for example, to the incidents in II.iii. and III.i. in which Barabas gives Ithamore the letter of challenge and Lodowick reads the letter—which ultimately result in the wordless fight and death of the two young erst-while friends, whose deaths, in turn, cause Abigail to retreat to the nunnery and set in motion the remaining action of the play. As for the notion that the "visual impression" forms a "constant support or foil to the words," an example from The Jew of Malta may be discovered in the fact that Barabas was presented on stage with an enormously large nose which would have been obvious to the audience from the beginning of the play. This ridiculous nose acts as a foil to the impression often given by the words in the first scenes of the play, that is, that Barabas has been unfairly treated and/or does not deserve the treatment he receives.

Brown continues that:

> Reliance on visual effect is perhaps most impressive in relation to individual characterization, for, besides maintaining a typically Renaissance complication of meaning and situation, a "show" implied a kind of density in character portrayal. The actor of Tamburlaine, Faustus and Barabas had to be able to hold the center of a large stage-picture and make a clear, physical statement; nervous subtleties or minute physical realism were required for neither words nor gestures.[19]

[18] Brown, p. 165.

[19] Ibid., p. 166.

In spite of the importance of the central character as indicated above, Brown believes that, to Marlowe:

> The play is always more significant than any of its characters can realize: the hero is viewed ironically or relatively,[20]

and,

> The same conditions are true for minor characters. For all their individualization, they are most memorable as, literally, "parts"—parts of a full design. They must be simply and strongly and variously themselves, in silence and stillness as well as in speech and movement, and so serve the whole wide perspective of the drama.[21]

In other words, the characters, including the hero, are interesting mainly because they are part of a larger whole: the play itself. The reader/spectator is meant to view the whole and to understand the whole through the hero and other characters. The characters are interesting and valuable only because they are parts of the whole play. To Brown,

> Even the star parts depend for their proper performance on being less than the play itself. Barabas declines in subtlety and resource from a near-potentate to a petty schemer disguised as a French musician; and he finishes his part caught in his own joke, absurdly yelling from a cauldron.[22]

One might argue that the above summary of Barabas' career is simplistic and superficial in the light of other possible interpretations of the play—for example, as a satire or a morality. However, one must concede that Brown's description of the visual effect of the play is suggestive. It must also be noted that Brown's "parts

[20] Brown, p. 168.

[21] Ibid., p. 171.

[22] Ibid., p. 171.

of a whole" theory, if carried to a logical conclusion, provides an interesting parallel with the theory of Alan Warren Friedman,[23] because Barabas was a "near-potentate" when he was part of the whole society and he deteriorated when he lost his "part" in this whole.

Brown concludes:

> [Marlowe's] plays are richly physical and grandly, even loudly, eloquent.... But I argue for their intellectual control because today we do not usually associate cineramic spectacle or massed trumpets and bugles with an intellectually responsible art.[24]

These words, written in 1964, seem somewhat dated in the 'eighties, as advances in film technology have often, as students of the cinema will insist, turned "cineramic spectacle" into "an intellectually responsible art." Marlowe's plays, Brown continues, do investigate responsible and intellectual subjects—"human consciousness and the nature of man and society"[25]—in a responsible way. He sees that,

> Marlowe was an intellectual dramatist who conceived a great panorama of "figures," each brightly and energetically itself, and created the dramatic and poetic means of presenting not merely the individual figures but his concepts and questions about the panorama, about the "world" of men.[26]

Harry Levin notes, in reference to Marlowe's work in general, that Marlowe's "primary concern is the theatre,"[27] and he believes

[23] See above, Chapter 10.

[24] Brown, p. 168.

[25] Ibid., p. 168.

[26] Ibid., p. 171.

[27] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 15.

that "Marlowe was a born playwright."[28] Richard Hillier's work provokes an awareness of theatrical elements in Marlowe's poetry, but Levin is overtly interested in Marlowe's use of poetry to create theatre: "Marlowe not only catches the melody of Spenser, as T.S. Eliot has remarked; he orchestrates it for the theatre."[29]

It has been shown[30] that, to Levin, Barabas is an overreacher whose failure is caused by his tragic flaw: his need for love. I have argued that the text does not completely support the theory that Barabas has an overriding need for love, and that Levin's theory of Barabas' failure is, consequently, not entirely convincing.

It seems to me, however, that Levin's perception of Marlowe's plays in general as hyperbolic and as containing the notion of metaphors taken literally and concepts acted out, provides a helpful overview of the playwright's distinctiveness. Levin's general observations in the following passages suggest a view of The Jew of Malta which is perhaps more useful than Levin's own conclusion that the play "deserves to be classed as a farce,—or, at any rate, a melodrama"[31]:

> [Marlowe's] stage becomes a vehicle for hyperbole, not merely by accrediting the incredible or supporting rhetoric with a platform and sounding board, but by taking metaphors literally and acting concepts out.[32]

[28] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 25.

[29] Ibid., p. 30.

[30] See above, pp. 119-21.

[31] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 103.

[32] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Levin maintains that the stage,

> Operating visually as well as vocally, ... converts symbols into properties, triumph must ride across in a chariot, hell must flare up in fireworks; students, no longer satisfied to read about Helen of Troy, must behold her in habit as she lived.[33]

Levin's perceptions about Marlowe's work seem to be applicable to The Jew of Malta: avarice in this play is a grotesquely-nosed Jew fingering his wealth, revenge is the now-monstrous Jew heaping up atrocious murders, and hell is a fiery cauldron into which the Jew ultimately falls. Marlowe's stage in The Jew of Malta does indeed "operate visually as well as vocally." Brown has noted that the play creates visual impressions for several purposes, and examples have been given above.[34] In addition, Barabas' wealth, the pot of poisoned rice, and the platform Barabas builds and through which he finally falls to his death—to name only a few examples—are not merely referred to verbally in the characters' speeches: they are actually displayed to view on stage, and all of them have metaphoric significance. The pot suggests witch-craft and diabolism; the wealth—avarice; and the platform—the stage itself.[35]

According to Levin, "Whereas poetry is said to transport us to an imaginative level, poetic drama transports that level to us: hyperbolically speaking, it brings the mountain to Mohammed."[36] Certainly Marlowe's use of a variety of theatrical techniques as

[33] Levin, The Overreacher, pp. 42-43.

[34] See above, pp. 242-45.

[35] See above, pp. 163-64.

[36] Levin, The Overreacher, pp. 42-43.

pointed out by Craik, Knoll and Brown, and the theatrical nature of the verse itself, "transports that [imaginative] level to us."

Levin states that, "The very element of exaggeration that characterizes Marlowe's technique and outlook lends his writing its exemplary quality."[37] Exaggeration is abundant in The Jew of Malta; from Barabas' extravagantly large nose, his excessive wealth and greed, his obsessive desire for revenge, the staggering number of murders he commits; to the complexity of Marlowe's plot, the hyperbolic nature of the language and poetry and the overreaching ideas it expresses. I would suggest that this element of exaggeration is a theatrical quality and that exaggeration—the use and control of it—is an important element in any theatrical endeavour, as it is closely tied to the goal of theatre, which is to make a small space (the stage) suggest the world (reality) and beyond (the significance and/or meaning of reality).

The notion of containing reality within the limits of a single building is staggering to the imagination and a challenge to the playwright. For example, if the play includes a battle involving thousands of mounted warriors, the playwright is faced with the problem of presenting this battle on stage. It is, of course, impossible to stage the actual battle and the practical objections to having even one mounted actor in a theatre are readily evident. The problem is to capture, in some measure, and to present on stage, the essence of the battle. The splendour of the armies, the passion, tension and vitality exuded by the warriors must be caught and relayed to

[37] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 15.

the audience. The enormousness of this task is pronounced. The playwright's task is difficult indeed. His main tool in achieving the desired effect is exaggeration: he must use exaggeration so that a few unmounted actors--or perhaps simply a verbal description--will suggest a blazing, full-scale battle among thousands of horsemen--a not inconsiderable accomplishment. He must extract the essence of the battle and exaggerate it while simultaneously compressing it into the form of a few actors or lines in such a way that the full force of the battle will impress the audience. The final effect must be one of concentrated exaggeration: "amazing skyscapes seen through a pin-hole"[38] or "Infinite riches in a little room."

Whether Marlowe's purpose in The Jew of Malta is moralistic, political, satirical, theological, comic, tragic, commercial or any combination thereof, the fact remains that it was written in the form of a play, and thus--in spite of any other qualities it may have--it was intended to be theatre; and, on the testimony of reports in Henslowe's Diary, it was actually very successful theatre. The problem remains to determine the nature of this theatre: is the play an example of the type of theatre designed merely to entertain, to draw in the crowds for an afternoon of light diversion, to gild the box office cash box; or is the play an example of theatre which tries to do more than provide light diversion from daily affairs?

The observations of Brown and Levin are particularly helpful in providing a key to the nature of the theatre of which The Jew of Malta is an example. Levin alludes to the presence of hyperbole and meta-

[38] Hillier, p. 125.

physical ideas in the play, and it is abundantly clear that these elements are indeed present. Brown argues convincingly that the play is not a "spectacle" but a "show." A "spectacle" to Brown is an uncontrolled cinematic extravagance, but a "show" is an artistically controlled and purposeful work of art. Antonin Artaud's theory of the theatre includes an emphasis on the metaphysical and the controlled and purposeful spectacle. Allusions made by Brown and Levin to the play's inherent theatricality suggest that Artaud's notions of what is real theatre might be applied to Marlowe, certainly to The Jew of Malta. Artaud, while never referring to The Jew of Malta, makes some observations on the nature of theatre which hold some productive suggestions for the play.

While Brown works at refining his interpretation of the terms "spectacle" and "show," there is a danger in the indiscriminate use of such terms, because agreement does not always exist among critics as to precisely what is meant by certain terms: one critic's definition of "show" or "spectacle" might be quite different from that of another. A case in point is Antonin Artaud's use of the term "spectacle." In discussing the Balinese theatre, Artaud praises the fact that "everything in this theatre is calculated with an enchanting mathematical meticulousness. Nothing is left to chance or personal initiative."[39] He notes that "Everything is ... regulated and impersonal."[40] As in the Balinese theatre Artaud admires, in his

[39] Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1958), pp. 57-58.

[40] Ibid., p. 58.

own "Theatre of Cruelty," the spectacle "will be calculated from one end to the other, like a code (un langage). Thus there will be no lost movements, all movements will obey a rhythm.... "[41] Accordingly, Artaud's "spectacle" is, among other things, a controlled and purposeful work of art; that is, Artaud's "spectacle" is similar to Brown's "show."

A closer examination of Artaud's theory about the nature of theatre and about what the theatre should be and do, reveals that there are many similarities between Artaud's ideal theatre and The Jew of Malta.

It is important to note that the type of theatre Artaud advocates—the "true" theatre as he perceives it—is not a theatre which provides light entertainment or an afternoon's diversion, to him a deplorable kind of theatre which offers a "purely descriptive and narrative theatre—story telling psychology."[42]

> An idea of the theatre has been lost. And as long as the theatre limits itself to showing us intimate scenes from the lives of a few puppets, transforming the public into Peeping Toms, it is no wonder the elite abandon it and the great public looks to the movies, the music hall or the circus for violent satisfactions.... [43]

He insists that "Our long habit of seeking diversion has made us forget the idea of a serious theatre," and he describes this "serious theatre"—true theatre to his way of thinking—as one which, "overturning all our preconceptions, inspires us with the fiery magnetism

[41] Artaud, p. 98.

[42] Ibid., p. 76.

[43] Ibid., p. 84.

of its images and acts upon us like a spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten."[44] Artaud asserts that "it is certain that we need above all a theatre that wakes us up: nerves and heart."[45]

Artaud's theatre will "attack the spectator's sensibility"[46] and it "must give us everything that is in crime, love, war, or madness, if it wants to recover its necessity."[47] Artaud describes the effect of this theatre:

> the Theatre of Cruelty proposes to resort to a mass spectacle; to seek the agitation of tremendous masses, convulsed and hurled against each other, a little of that poetry of festivals and crowds when, all too rarely nowadays, the people pour out into the streets.[48]

Artaud is speaking of the necessity for tremendous impact, for bombardment of the audience with stunning images, with horrors and with violence. These requirements are met by The Jew of Malta. Its plot is complex, fast-moving and horror-studded. A multitude of atrocious murders (the poisoning of the nuns, the strangling of Friar Barnardine, the murder of Ithamore and his friends, etc.), and numerous other vile deeds such as the arrangement of Lodowick's and Mathias' deaths and the framing of Friar Jacomo, continuously assault the spectators' senses. As William Hazlitt has remarked, the play "is a tissue of gratuitous, ... and incredible atrocities, which are con-

[44] Artaud, pp. 84-85.

[45] Ibid., p. 84.

[46] Ibid., p. 86.

[47] Ibid., p. 85.

[48] Ibid., p. 85.

mitted, one upon the back of the other, by the parties concerned.... "[49] It is ironic that this intended put-down by Hazlitt in fact points up the play's essential merit as a piece of theatre.

In Artaud's theatre, "we shall try to concentrate around famous personages, atrocious crimes, superhuman devotions ... "[50]—requisites achieved by The Jew of Malta. Marlowe's play revolves around one main character who is famous in Malta as a result of his wealth (in I.i.67-68 of the play, Barabas instructs a merchant to use his name to obtain credit, saying "Go tell 'em the Jew of Malta sent thee, man:/Tush, who amongst 'em knows not Barabas?"), the play is full of atrocious crimes, and the presence of super-human devotions is evident in Barabas' overreaching greed and obsessive desire for revenge.

Artaud continues that his drama will be one

> which, without resorting to the defunct images of the old myths, shows that it can extract the forces which struggle within them. In a word, we believe that there are living forces in what is called poetry...:[51]

Levin and Hillier and, one would suspect, virtually all critics of most of Marlowe's verse in the play, would agree that there are living "forces" in Marlowe's poetry. Artaud defines these forces as "whatever brings to birth images of energy in the unconscious and gratuitous crime on the surface."[52] He goes on to say that "A violent and concentrated action is a kind of lyricism: it summons up

[49] Hazlitt in Moulton, p. 133.

[50] Artaud, p. 85.

[51] Ibid., p. 85.

[52] Ibid., p. 82.

supernatural images, a bloodstream of images, a bleeding spurt of images in the poet's head and in the spectator's as well," concluding with a description applicable to The Jew of Malta: "I propose ... a theatre in which violent physical images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator seized by the theatre as by a whirlwind of higher forces."[53]

> Artaud says that the primary purpose of theatre should be to
>
> mak[e] contact with that underlying power, call it thought-energy, the life force, the determinism of change, lunar menses or anything you like. Beneath the poetry of the texts, there is the actual poetry, without form and without text,[54]

and he sees that "the theatre, far from copying life, puts itself whenever possible in communication with [these] pure forces."[55] Levin's ideas of the overreaching efforts of Marlowe's heroes are closely allied to this notion of underlying power, thought-energy, the life force and the "actual poetry." According to Levin, "It is not enough for his heroes and heroines to be better than their literary prototypes; they must be the best of their kind; and, more than paragons, they must be non-pareils, beyond compare, resembling only the phoenix,"[56] and "to the extent that they can disregard the canons of good and evil, they are supermen."[57] Marlowe's heroes, then, aspire beyond the normal limitations of mankind: they are, in

[53] Artaud, pp. 82-83.

[54] Ibid., p. 78.

[55] Ibid., p. 82.

[56] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 22.

[57] Ibid., p. 31.

effect, at least partly "tuned in" to the life force, the underlying power that runs through life. Barabas displays this nature: he sees himself as "fram'd of finer mould than common men"—not for him the obscurity of the masses, the passive acceptance of cruelties life forces upon him. He seeks to transcend by virtue of his "tuning in," so to speak, to the life force. His mental and physical energy seems illimitable, indomitable: he contrives the most ingenious, inglorious schemes and physically carries them out.

Artaud's belief that, "In the manifested world, metaphysically speaking, evil is the permanent law, and good is an effort and already one more cruelty added to the other,"[58] is reflected in The Jew of Malta, a play in which the "good" element as represented by Abigail, is eliminated early in the play, and the ultimate winner in the play—Ferneze—is not a representative of the forces of "good," but is only more adept at "policy," treachery, and hypocrisy, which are qualities the play has, in Barabas, identified as evil.[59] It does indeed seem that in the restoration of Ferneze's power, "evil is the permanent law" in Malta.

Perhaps more than any other single passage in Artaud's work, the following excerpt from The Theatre and Its Double suggests an impression generated by The Jew of Malta:

> If the theatre, like dreams, is bloody and inhuman, it is, more than just that, to manifest and unforgettably root within us the idea of a perpetual conflict, a spasm in which life is continually lacerated, in which everything in life rises up and

[58] Artaud, p. 103.

[59] See above, Chapter Eleven.

exerts itself against our appointed rank....[60]

The passage is particularly applicable to Barabas' experience as revealed in the play. For Barabas, "for all his monstrous activism," an inhabitant of "a small and static world"[61] in which the ruling motivation is the acquisition of wealth ("Desire of gold"); "everything in creation" does indeed rise up and exert itself against his appointed rank as the wealthiest, the most notorious and the most successful Jewish merchant in Malta. The governing agents rob him of his wealth, his daughter betrays (he believes) and abandons him by converting to Christianity, his slave betrays him, and ultimately the people he is trying to help (albeit for selfish reasons) turn against him and precipitate his death. In spite of the fact that Barabas brings on much of the harm against himself, it would still seem that "everything in creation" has indeed exerted itself against him.

To Artaud,

> a theatre of cruelty ... on the level of performance, ... is ... the ... terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theatre has been created to teach us that first of all.[62]

This notion is clearly reflected in Marlowe's Barabas: at the play's beginning, in spite of his tremendous wealth and aspirations, he is not free; he is vulnerable and the sky does fall on his head (the

[60] Artaud, p. 92.

[61] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 80.

[62] Artaud, p. 79.

Governor takes away his wealth); and, in spite of his best efforts, at the play's end he is still not free and the sky collapses on him for good. Yet in Barabas' final defeat and Ferneze's victory, there is the suggestion that nobody is free: all are vulnerable in a world in which evil is the permanent law.

An examination of Artaud's theory of theatre vis-a-vis The Jew of Malta reveals that Artaud might provide a key to decoding some of the play's perplexities. One may conclude that Marlowe's understanding of theatre and the purpose of theatre, as revealed in The Jew of Malta, corresponds to that of Artaud. Such a conclusion is useful because it allows that the play has intrinsic artistic worth and merit in itself, as theatre (in Artaud's sense of the word, as opposed to a notion of light entertainment) and it does not preclude other interpretations of the play in terms of genre.

The reason many earlier critics praised Marlowe's poetry while disparaging his drama, is that their understanding of the requirements of "good drama" included believable, true-to-life characterization and events; and, because Barabas and many of the events of the play are neither true-to-life nor believable, the drama was assumed to have failed. But an understanding of theatre along the lines of Levin and Artaud as that which is able to create spectacle, grand visions, paintings, in which cosmic forces and metaphysical ideas are evident, on stage, by whatever means are available to the dramatist; is certainly an interpretation which would include The Jew of Malta as an example of such theatre.

The cumulative effect of the remarkably divergent Jew of Malta criticism during the past four centuries shows that the play resists being tidied away into any category. Levin has noted that "Tamburlaine is an aesthetic spectacle, framed by an equivocal morality."[63] On the basis of the observations made concerning the play as theatre, I would suggest that it is acceptable and more useful to consider the implications of The Jew of Malta as an aesthetic spectacle (in Brown's sense of "show" and Artaud's sense of "spectacle"), which can generate understanding and unexpected insights, rather than to persist in an attempt to categorize the play. Such a conclusion is of course open ended. It suggests pursuing approaches to the play which are expansive, and which do not delimit the experience of the viewers or the readers by simply informing them of the possible types of drama that is before them.

[63] Levin, The Overreacher, p. 76.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I have divided the bibliography into several categories. Works actually cited in the thesis are listed in the first bibliography. Works applicable to The Jew of Malta which are not referred to in the thesis but which might be helpful to someone researching the play, are listed in the second bibliography.

Studies comparing The Jew of Malta with The Merchant of Venice are arranged alphabetically in a third bibliography. These works have not been referred to in the text of the thesis for several reasons. First, as might be expected, the critics' conclusions concerning Marlowe's play can be summed up in a few words: Barabas was probably the prototype for Shylock, and the quality of The Jew of Malta does not approach that of The Merchant of Venice. Second, the conclusions concerning Barabas do not go beyond the categories identified in this thesis, that is: Machiavellian, monster, typical Jew as the Elizabethans perceived Jews, passionate yearner, etcetera. Third, the studies inevitably reflect more upon Shylock than upon Barabas, and Shakespeare's play is the main object of concern in the critiques. I have included the bibliographical listing of these reviews as part of my effort to furnish a definitive bibliography of The Jew of Malta. I have assigned the works a separate alphabetical listing in the hope that such a list might facilitate research efforts of students of

Shakespeare, and/or of students seeking comparative studies of the plays.

It was my wish to include in the body of the thesis references to all works which address themselves to The Jew of Malta. The length of the bibliography surely indicates that to do so would swell the bulk of the study to exhaustingly ludicrous proportions. Even to annotate briefly all of the entries in the last two bibliographies would make for an unwieldy appendix to the thesis. With allowances for inevitable omissions, the bibliographies are intended to be an exhaustive listing of works written in English directly or (in the case of very early criticism) indirectly referring to The Jew of Malta through 1974.

Perhaps a corollary conclusion can be drawn from the abundance of bibliographical material, a conclusion which I hope will not be immodest to make, which points up the potentially helpful nature of this thesis. The amount of material written on The Jew of Malta is remarkable. Even a casual sampling of the books, articles, monographs and other studies would require untold hours of hunting and reading. It is my hope that the thesis and the accompanying bibliographies might lead researchers directly to what they are looking for and free them from the more tedious aspects of scholarship. In short, I would like the thesis and the bibliographies to be a guide and a labour-saving device.

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