

The Representation of the Jews and Others in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *the Merchant of Venice* on the Elizabethan Stage: Convention, Rhetoric , Sources and the Spirit of the Age

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Abstract

Jews were represented on the Elizabethan stage as characters of evil deeds, motivated by money to control others and would project hatred towards those who inflict pain on them whether physical or psychological. Themes of money, hatred, love, assuming control over others are archetypal issues, which can be found in almost all dramas of the world. On these common grounds of the representations of characters in plays like those portrayed in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1633) and Shakespeare's *the Merchant of Venice* (1600), these topics permeate the old and ancient dramas, of the Greeks and Romans and up to the present times. Such everlasting- themes have always been tackled on the world's stage. The core issue in drama is whether the audience, watching any play in its time or at any age, enjoy the performance of the play. Marlowe's Barabas or Shakespeare's Shylock, for example, these characters have inspired many critics who always converge and diverge about such characters. This article, however, argues that one should first read these plays from definite perspectives like convention, rhetoric, sources and the spirit of the age in order to understand the reality of some circumstances during that era, Elizabethan times. Another perspective, equally important, is the fact that the Jews, the Turks and Christians were represented on the Elizabethan stage as objects of entertainment and instruction. Finally, one should read closely the Elizabethan and the reception of the plays above mentioned to understand them in the proper context. Interestingly enough, Marlowe's play is a revenge tragedy, while Shakespeare is a comedy.

Key words: anti-Semitism, Machiavelli, More, the parameters of Convention, Rhetoric, Sources and the Spirit of the Age.

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Introduction

“The Golden Age for English literature, whose central canon or literary tradition included” Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney and “others of the same status of literary dominance and fame” (Logan and Greenblatt, 2006, pp. 485 - 509), was also the age of the English Renaissance. “Renaissance England was home to a diversity of philosophical positions that are reflected not just in the Bard’s plays, but also throughout the literature of the period” (Simon, 2106, p.1). It was also the age of drama when Elizabethan audience were the dramatic critics of any play they watch on stage. Great dramatists would also write to please and instruct their audiences according to some measures, such as convention, rhetoric, sources and the spirit of the age. To place the plays in context, one can with some effort understand the reality and fiction of the implication of the actions and characters, which the plays represented during that era. These criteria help us understand the Elizabethan drama as a whole and the plays under discussion in particular. Taking into consideration judgments of both: those of the audience in the Elizabethan times and those of our modern times, one can form solid criticism of the plays above mentioned. In the Elizabethan era, men of letters who were both poets and dramatists, like Marlowe and Shakespeare could have never ever, merely out of their imagination, created Barabas and Shylock; they must have witnessed cases, or read about real historical figures, to represent them in their plays. And with their creative minds and imagination, they must have transformed such characters as objects of instruction and entertainment for their audiences on the Elizabethan stage.

The Parameter of Rhetoric

Consequently, a critic of Elizabethan times should consider some parameters to analyze the literature of that time, which was didactic; it is “the product of a rhetorical culture, a culture steeped in the arts of persuasion” Erasmus’ *DE Copia* (1516)), as cited by Logan and Greenblatt, “taught its readers how to cultivate copiousness, verbal richness in discourse.” Elizabethans were “capable of admiring plainness of speech” and examples of these can be found in the plays above mentioned. Interestingly enough, in Sidney’s *Defense of Poetry* (1530), as cited by Logan and Greenblatt, argues that “renaissance poetry is intended not in representational accuracy but in the magical power of exquisite workmanship to draw its reality into fabricated worlds.” More’s *Utopia* (1516), as cited by the critics above mentioned, “brought as well, radical changes to the English society in the context of education, cultivation and thought. Humanism was taking over the traditional role of Aristotelian philosophy.” However, the classics were “also studied for the moral, political and philosophical truths, be reconciled to the moral vision of Christianity” (pp. 485 - 509). These truths can be found in almost every work of Elizabethan poets, dramatists and thinkers. The influence came about, according to (Knights 1980), “more of Shakespeare’s audience were likely to have formal education than was then assumed, and that the methods of school and university education enforced by the many books on rhetoric and the arts of speech were likely to have influenced the approach to dramatic poetry by many of the original auditors”(pp.1-3). In brief, this is one of the constituents of English literature, that is being rhetorical. For instance, Marlowe's prologue is full of rhetoric to persuade the audience of his play Here comes the function of drama when its major

role is to “instruct and entertain.” “The drama has always played an essential role in educating the public. It developed over the ages: the antiquities, Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries—producing different kinds of theatres, classical, closet, absurd and experimental” (Zaiter 2019, p. 222). Therefore, Marlowe and Shakespeare must have tackled the Jews in the plays above mentioned by employing four parameters, which the study proposes: convention, rhetoric, sources and the spirit of the age. (Bradbrook 1952, pp. 4-6, 87-88, 97) discusses convention as one of the parameters employed as an aid of reading Elizabethan drama. First, he defines convention and how it evolved. Then he expounds the influences and the common grounds of Elizabethan revenge plays with the drama of Restoration or that of the nineteenth century. Here one should explain one crucial aspect of the Elizabethan drama, which was “frankly rhetorical. It was because so many of the speeches were based upon public property of one kind or another—common tags or common situations—that this rhetorical speech became possible. It is manifested in two ways: by variations of the level of the speech, and by variations in direction” (P. 97). For example, “the expository soliloquy was particularly necessary for the Machiavellian villain. Marlowe uses Machiavelli as prologue to *The Jew of Malta* (p113). By the same token, “Shakespeare’s poetic language was nourished on rhetoric by the language of common life although Shakespeare sometimes made fun of his rhetorical training, he certainly used it, at first in rather obvious ways, then with increasing skill and subtlety.” His use of “rhetorical devices could be used to disguise, to manipulate, or to put across an attitude not wholly sincere, he learnt yet another way of instructing his audience to the importance of the unspoken speech. Consequently, Renaissance concept of literary composition as being a deliberate process, involving a plan, a definite aim, and a distinct range of emotional effects on the audience” (Knights, pp. 2-8).

The Parameter of Convention

Bradbrook expounds our second parameter which places Elizabethan drama in context for both readers and writers as well as the audience. He starts with definition of the term convention. Then he discusses how it develops over time and finally, he arrives at the possibility of the adherence to the so-called Elizabethan conventions.

convention may be defined as an agreement between writers and readers, whereby the artist is allowed to limit and simplify his material in order to secure greater concentration through a control of the distribution of emphasis. Conventions which are acknowledged have usually been erected into a system of Rules. The neoclassic conventions, which were largely the creation of Renaissance Critics, were considered to have the authority of the Ancients and to constitute the only right method of making plays: they were prescribed not as convenience but as a duty. The value of such a system of Rules is that it imposes consistency, and only allows one set of conventions at a time. The Elizabethan conventions have never been acknowledged because they were not formulated. The neo-classical creed was the orthodox one: though the dramatist did not adhere to it, they could not construct an alternative one. It might have been possible to distort the Rules until they fitted contemporary practice, but Elizabethan criticism was not sufficiently advanced for so large

an undertaking. It was nevertheless impossible that writers who worked at the speed of these dramatists should not evolve a convention (pp. 4-6).

Bradbrook then establishes the influence of “the Senecal tradition” on Elizabethan dramatists like Marlowe and Kyd and the common grounds between revenge plays and those of Restoration or the nineteenth century ones. “They relied partly on the Senecal tradition and on the practice of greater dramatists like Kyd and Marlowe. The Revenge plays have in common a certain criticism of life, and the common form should be convenient for expressing it. The imagery and idiom of these plays is the means by which the convention is unified and made poetic. The essential structure of Elizabethan drama lies not in the narrative or the characters but in the words. The mental habits of the age were very different from ours and, in some respects, much closer to those of the Middle Ages, particularly in the taste for allegory and the attitude towards rhetoric. The less important the dramatist, the more essential it is to his play primarily as Elizabethan literature, and only secondly as a play. The Restoration or the nineteenth century that to approach it in its relation to *Euphues*, the *Arcadia* and the *Faery Queene* might at least have the justification of novelty” (pp.87-8). However, Bradbrook excludes Shakespeare from his contemporaries and the plays standing as the backdrop of Elizabethan drama. He argues: “the plays of Shakespeare should be excluded from the mind when the lesser Elizabethans are being considered. Shakespeare can be judged by nineteenth-century standards without suffering an eclipse. He is so different from his contemporaries, particularly in the matter of characterization, that is unfair to judge them by him. Spencer and not Shakespeare was the typical Elizabethan poet, and the Spenserian standards are much safer to apply to the dramatists. (p. 88). Finally, Bradbrook expounds the influences of the ancients(Seneca) on the Elizabethan dramatists.

Elizabethan drama depends for its moral code upon several sources; its ethics were ostensibly Christian, but since the direct treatment of religious questions was prohibited, the language of the drama was coloured by the language of the Church. The classics provided the learned writers with a philosophy: owing to the general ignorance of the comparative inaccessibility of the Greek dramatists, Seneca was the model dramatist, and his stoicism affected the whole of the Elizabethan drama. The “sentences” of the Ancients had a kind of special authority and sanctity; the epigrams and sentences of Seneca became axiomatic, and provided the playwrights with a body of common belief fixed in particular formulae—with a liturgy as well as a creed. The sixteenth century was particularly rich in tight little sayings which passed current for a decade or two and were forgotten, as well as in the old folk-sayings which persist for generations (p. 97).

These classical or popular precepts, above mentioned, provided the moral framework of the drama. This leads us to the third parameter of interpreting the plays under discussion, sources. Such parameters are very crucial in putting the plays in proper context. Writers cannot in any age

compose their works without drawing their sources from historical, scientific, political or cultural events, which form a good background for poems, short stories, novels, articles, or plays. One should not forget the imagination of men of letters to shape these sources as flesh and blood added to their aesthetic of artistic creation. This is our third parameter for interpreting the plays above mentioned. In addition, sources to the writer are as vital to literary creation as oxygen to life.

Sources

Now we arrive at the third parameter, sources. With these three parameters, one can formulate the supposition that these parameters, along with the spirit of the age to be discussed later, have been influential causes of representing the Jews, Christians and Turks as such in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. On the Elizabethan stage not only the Jews but also, the Moors, (Moslem Turks) and Christians, and others, were represented as objects of entertainment in the form of tragedy: "clashes between the Barbary and the knights of Malta" where the action of the play "centers in the demand of the Turks for the payment of an annual tribute which is due. It is a pure romance, for Malta never paid tribute to the Turks" (Chew, 1974,pp.521-22,24). "The stereotype Turk, sensual cruel, flaying the Christian population, was really a product of the pamphlet literature of the sixteenth century, when rulers hoped to increase the contribution of their subjects toward Turkish crusade by vivid presentations of the atrocities committed by the enemy" (Gilmore, 1952, pp. 20-1). This political interpretation originated against the Turks by the Elizabethan monarchy was to establish hatred towards the Turks and pave the way for the Christian crusade as means towards an end. The enemy was the Turk, an external one. The second enemy put on Elizabethan stage was the Jew. But one can ask, why were the Jews represented as villains in the plays above mentioned. Elizabethan dramatists, particularly, Marlowe and Shakespeare wrote these plays by drawing on historical records. "Medieval England's Jewish population, the recurrent object of persecution, extortion, and massacre, had been officially expelled by King Edward in 1290, but Elizabethan England harbored a tiny number of Jews or Jewish converts to Christianity. They were the objects of suspicion and hostility." Furthermore, "Jews were not officially permitted to resettle in England." On these grounds "London playgoers enjoyed the spectacle of the downfall of the wicked Barabas and the forced conversion of Shylock" (Logan and Greenblatt ,pp. 496-7). Similarly, Chew concludes that "prejudices against the Turks reached a climax in the oft-expressed notion that they were incarnate devils or at any rate the chosen followers of Satan, that they derived from hell or were all going there" (p.141). From this situation the Jews were not alone in being represented on the Elizabethan stage but also the Turks and Christians. In his resourceful book *Discovering Shakespeare: a New Guide to the Plays* (Brown 1981) shows us how to read Shakespeare's plays in the context of Elizabethan age, as a philosopher and the books from which he read and drew his characters and actions in his plays. Brown argues:

Fortunately, Shakespeare sources and the great books of the Renaissance, we can enter the intellectual world which Shakespeare knew and explored in his plays. For *King Lear* we can read, as Shakespeare did, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*. To these we should add *The Book of Job* in the Bible, Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly* and, for better understanding of Edmund's ambition and intelligence, Machiavelli's *The Prince* or, better still, his discourses. These books will enlighten our understanding of many other plays, for they are seminal works: *The Book of Common Prayer* and the *Homilies* of the Established Church; the works of Bacon, Hooker, Calvin, Aquinas, Seneca, Plato; Sir Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric*, George Puttenham's *Art of poesie*; Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* the collaborative *Mirror for Magistrates*, or Castiglione's *Courtier* in Sir Thomas Hoby's translation; the works of the poets Chaucer, Spencer, Raleigh and Donne; the plays of Marlowe, Lyly and Jonson; the various writings of Nashe, Greene, Dekker and Heywood (p.142).

These sources must have been of great help to both Marlowe and Shakespeare in representing the Elizabethan time by means of their plays when selecting characters from minorities like Jews, Arabs, Turks, and Africans. Marlowe's and Shakespeare's audience must have been fond of watching these plays as means to educate and entertain them, an ever-lasting goal of drama since the dawn of the literary history of the genre from the Greek and Roman times till the present day. One may ask, why did Marlowe and Shakespeare choose Barabas and Shylock in their plays? (Ed 2013) considers such characters as "outcasts" represented as such by Marlowe and Shakespeare "to criticize their society" which shunned them. The two dramatists "chose different ways to represent" these characters. "Whereas Marlowe presents his Jew[Barabas] in a Machiavellian state in which all members are equally thirsty for power and use their policy to fulfill their hidden agendas, Shakespeare uses legal channels to seek justice for his outcast[Shylock]" (p. 5). Ed concludes that Marlowe and Shakespeare "show us how outcasts end up in a discriminating society. They either risk being eliminated because they do not conform to conventions or are assimilated in the system by negating their true identity" (p. 6).

The Spirit of the Age

It was the spirit of the age which made the dramatists like Marlowe and Shakespeare take such a stand in representing Barabas and Shylock in their plays. In the Elizabethan time, Machiavelli's *The Prince* and More's *Utopia* influenced dramatists, poets and politicians alike. The period witnessed the impact of two philosophers Machiavelli and More whose major works, *The Prince* and *Utopia*, were enlightening for the English and Europeans alike. Their views can be inferred from the different portrayal of the Jews, Barabas and Shylock; the former represents the realist political point of view, the latter the idealist. Gilmore argues:

At the very time when Machiavelli was proposing the remedy of the strong men for the evils of his time and country and holding up to admiration an ideal derived from the study

of Roman history, a younger contemporary in England was also engaged in examining contemporary politics and society. In the work of More the traditional materials of political thought were used to construct unreal Utopia, existing neither in time nor in space, contrasting with the real world of European monarchies, while in the work of Machiavelli the new realistic analysis was used to describe the contemporary scene. Both drew on the inspiration of humanist interests, but Machiavelli remained fundamentally a pessimist about the immediate future of the European situation while More represented the optimistic hopes of Erasmian circle (pp.135-6).

From this quote one can infer how the political atmosphere of notions dominating Italy and England dominated the European world. Marlowe and Shakespeare must have read these books representing the spirit of the age to enlighten their audience of the knowledge of the world. Before leaving this quote, a note of reminder should be made clear to the readers and critics of the plays. (Bennet 2017) explains to the readers of the book the implication of the phrase "the prince" as used in Machiavelli's *The Prince*: "this work Principe isn't a title and doesn't designate a rank; it stands for any ruler of a state, whether a king or queen or duke or count etc. The English word 'prince' also had that broad meaning once (Queen Elizabeth I referred to herself as a 'prince'), and it seems the best word to use here" (Glossary).

The World of the Plays: Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *the Merchant of Venice*

To delve deep in the world of the two plays, we find many common grounds between the two plays. "Two Jewish villains, two rebellious runaway daughters, two Mediterranean countries that declare to uphold Christian principles" (Ed, 2013, p. 11). Other similarities one can locate when reading the plays closely that both are "imbued with Western representations of the otherness or alterity of Jews in Elizabethan England. Religious and ethnic tensions are felt in every confrontation between the dominant and marginal groups present in the texts where all characters struggle to gain power over the other party. Both playwrights use this strategy as an adequate tool to criticize their contemporary society" (p. 12). Furthermore, (BacaKsiz: 4 - 9) finds common themes which permeate the Elizabethan times. For example, Marlowe and Shakespeare "penned anti Semitic themes. They had described the sentiment and social and cultural point of the era." Another issue which BacaKsiz tackles a case in point when Marlowe's play was written, "Jewish people were thought to be the murderers of Jesus and that is why some people showed some kind of hatred toward Jews. Thus, they thought of them as sinful and unwelcomed people." Marlowe's portrayal of the Jews in his play had impacted Shakespeare's play in many aspects: "Shakespeare owes Marlowe much, both in the choice of material" and "the many echoes" employed in his play. The content of this play [*The Merchant of Venice*] includes revenge and money including anti-semantic details(pp, 4-8). Thus, what applies to *The Jew of Malta* applies to *The Merchant Of Venice*. Interestingly enough, Barabas and Shylock "the stereotypes were common in Shakespearean society. People hated Jews since they were lending money" for a big interest, and

according to Christian values, was “ a big sin” p.9). (Logan 2007) finds echo from Marlowe's play in Shakespeare's, which in style rather than content. He argues: “For Shakespeare, the echo seems to have a way of a link with a popular play without diminishing his talents or belittling Marlowe's. There is no question about that when reading the plays closely. In each of the plays, one of the central characters is a Jew who has a beautiful daughter. “In *The Merchant of Venice* it is Shylock and his daughter Jessica and in *The Jew of Malta* it is Barabas and his daughter Abigail. The two Jewish men are similar as they both deal with money, Shylock as a lender and Barabas as a merchant. They both reside in Italy and have stakes in ships that are at sea, Shylock through the money he has lent to Bassanio and Barabas through his own stock on ships” (Misiura).

The Prologue and Act Five in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* : Beginning and End

To understand Marlowe's play, one should look closely at the genesis of the play to grasp the representation of the Jews: the beginning and the end. To look closely at the prologue introduced to the audience by Machevill, who sets the scene for the whole play and what it is all about, says he is:

Admired I am of those that hate me most
 Though some speak openly against my books,
 Yet will they read me and thereby attain
 To Peter's chair; and they cast me off,
 Are poisoned by my climbing followers.
 I count religion but a childish toy
 And hold there is no sin but ignorance.
 Birds of the air will tell of murders past?
 I am ashamed to hear such fooleries.
 Many will talk of title to a crown
 What right had Caesar to the empire?
 Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure
 When, like the Draco's, they were writ in blood.
 Hence comes it that a strong built citadel
 Commands much more than letters can impart:
 Which maxim had but Phalaris observed
 He'd never bellowed in a brazen bull,
 Of great ones envy: O'the poor petty wights
 Let me be envied and not pitied
 But whither am I bound? I come not, I,
 To read a lecture here in Britanie,
 But to present the tragedy of a Jew
 Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed
 Which money was not got without my means.
 And let him not be entertained the worse
 Because he favours me. (*The Jew of Malta*, The Prologue: 2)

From this prologue one can come up with many interpretations. According to (Simkin 2001), Marlowe's prologue is "the most fascinating of all Marlowe's openings." This is an interesting observation based as well on good analysis of all Marlowe's plays. Secondly, Simkin expounds other aspects of the prologue. "Its speaker is given a name Machiavel, a name that would have resonated powerfully for an Elizabethan audience, the educated amongst them is particular. The Machiavel Marlowe puts on stage is a parody of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 – 1527), a figure of some significance in European political theory at this time"(p,23). This means that Marlowe must have read *The Prince* and its teachings. "Machiavelli and his writings had been dominated by Elizabethan culture; even the term Machiavelli is used to denote someone or something that is untrustworthy, manipulative, or in possession of hidden agenda"(p.24). Thus, Machiavelli has been the spirit of the Elizabethan age, inspiring men of power and men of letters like Marlowe, Shakespeare and others to write their plays. In addition to what has been said Simkin records some important events in the prologue which is to be seen as a work of history and dramatic art. The prologue to Marlowe's play "draws on and contributes to that construction of Machiavelli, perpetuating the stereotype of the evil manipulator, and he proceeds to alienate his audience by associating himself with the 'Guise: Henry the Third Duke of Guise' (1550-88) was a French nobleman reviled in Protestant England for his part in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, in which thousands of Huguenots (French protestants, were slaughtered at the instigation of the Catholic French family, Marlowe, incidentally, depicts the massacre and its political fall-out in his play *The massacre at Paris*, which survives in a mangled form" (p. 25). The prologue as well reveals a paradox of the people who follow the teachings of Machiavel and yet they hate him much. What a hypocrisy! Marlowe also cites in the prologue "Peter's chair" referring to "Pope's throne" representing "Catholicism." Thus, Marlowe "creates a personality for his prologue figure: Machiavel is haughty, dismissing his critics at a stroke. He is offhand and provocatively dismissive of the enormity of the crimes committed in his name. The tone of the whole speech is powerfully rhetorical: he states his traits and his opinions bluntly and without concessions, answering his own question as a matter of course "What right had Caesar to the empery / Might first made kings." The prologue as well alludes to "Draco, in Athens in the seventeenth century BC, established a code that dedicated a capital punishment for virtually every offence, hence laws that "were writ in blood." Then after illustrating the harsh rules written by Draco, the prologue comments on religion as "a childish toy" and "ignorance" as "a sin". These concepts "would have shocked the average Elizabethan theater goers" since at that time religion was a controversial issue which caused civil wars in England between Protestants and Catholics"(p.26). Finally, the closing lines of the prologue Machiavel stops talking about himself and draws our attention to the major character in the play Barabas the Jew who is greedy and "Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed" (*The Jew of Malta*, the prologue, p. 2). This has been the beginning of the play , whose original title was *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta*, the end of it sums the play by presenting the triangle of conflict which ends for the sake of Elizabethan audience: The Turk Calymath and Barabas the Jew who betrayed Calymath and finally both were punished by the Christian governor who stood for the Elizabeth as idealistic character representing the Christian ideals, power, values and the spirit of the age. The last speech in the play says it all. The governor is resuming control over the city and villains are punished. Marlowe is educating and entertaining his audience according to the convention of the time.

Ferneze. Why then the house was fir'd,
 Blown up, and all thy soldiers massacred.
 Calymath. O, monstrous treason!
 Ferneze. A Jew's courtesy;
 For he that did by treason work our fall,
 Treason hath deliver'd thee to us:
 Know, therefore, till they father hath made good
 The ruins done to Malta and to us,
 Thou canst not part; for Malta shall be freed,
 Or Selim ne'er to Ottoman.
 Calymath. Nay, rather, Christians, let me go to Turkey,
 In person there to mediate your peace:
 To keep me here will naught advantage you (act five)

However, as the play develops, the major characters are revealed in accordance with the structure of Elizabethan convention which demands a rising action, or the conflict –paying the tribute to the Turks by taking Barabas' money and property if he does not convert to Christianity . Now Barabas the Jew is in confrontation with the Christian ruler of Malta Ferneze. In this play not only the Jews are put on the Elizabethan stage but also the Turks and Christians. The relationship between them creates the spirit of the age to entertain the Elizabethan audience and to instruct them about the world around them. Marlowe in *The Jew of Malta*, attempts to reflect “what his contemporaries found: impiety, audacity, worship of power, ambiguous sexuality, occult aspirations, defiance of moral order, and above all else a sheer exaltations of the possibilities of rhetoric, of persuasive force of heroic poetry” (Bloom 2010) . Since Marlowe's play is read a long with Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, one should find differences to make the comparison complete. Marlowe's play contrasts sharply with *The Merchant of Venice* which may have been composed so as to overgo it on the stage.” Another angel of contrast is Marlowe's Barabas is “ a savage original, while Shakespeare's Shylock, despite his supposed humanization, is essentially the timeless anti-semantic as the Gospel “ (pp. 11-12).

Act One and Five in *The Merchant of Venice* : Beginning and End

However, in *The Merchant of Venice*, act 1, The British Library offers a website titled “Treasures in Full Shakespeare in Quarto” in which there is a brief statement summarizing the plot of the play: “Antonio and Bassanio sign an agreement with Shylock, a Jew, to borrow money from him. The bond is to be a pound of Antonio's flesh”. More clearly than this very brief plot of the play, Tanju writes: “In the powerful and putatively liberal city-state of Venice, young Bassanio needs a loan of 3000 ducats so that he can properly woo a wealthy heiress of Venice named Portia. To get the necessary funds Bassanio entreats his friend Antonio. Antonio's money unfortunately, is invested in merchant ships that are presently at sea; however, to help his friend, Antonio arranges for a short-term loan of the money from Shylock, a wealthy Jewish usurer. When pressed, Shylock strikes a terrible bargain: the 3000 ducats must be repaid in 3 months or Shylock will exact a pound of flesh from Antonio. The merchant agrees to this, confident in the return of his ships before the appointed date of repayment” (p. 3). This happens in comedy since the original title of the play is

“*The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice, or Otherwise Called the Jew of Venice*” (freebookssummary.com). To look closely at the opening scene and then at the closing one, we can follow the action as played by the characters in the play to achieve the desired goals intended by Shakespeare, to educate and entertain his Elizabethan audience in a comedy of a situation when Antonio is asked to pay a pound of his flesh if he cannot pay back Shylock's money. Unlike, Marlowe's prologue, the opening scene in Shakespeare's play takes us to the world of the play immediately. What an art of dramatization of setting the scene for the whole play, fear of loss, anticipation of his ships to arrive safely and his lack of money to lend his friend Bassanio.

Antonio. In sooth, I know not why I am so sad;

It wearies me; you say, it wearies you;

.....
Salarino. Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, where your argosies with portly sail,
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,

.....
Gratiano. You look not well, signior Antonio;
You have too much respect upon the world:

.....
Antonio. I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

Gratiano. Let me play the fool:

.....
Bassanio. In Belmont is a lady richly left,
And she is fair, and, fairer than the word

.....
Her name is Portia; nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia.

.....
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors .

O, my Antonio! Had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift.
That I should questionless be fortunate.

Antonio. Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money, nor commodity
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth,
Try what my credit can in Venice do;
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia. (act I, scene one).

Finally as in all comedies a happy ending resolves all the challenges encountering the heroes of comedies. Now the good news has arrived and there is no need for Antonio to pay back a pound of his own flesh if he does not meet the deadline as he had agreed on Shylock's terms. Antonio is saved by the arrival of the letter announcing the good news.

Portia. You are all amaz'd:
 Here is a letter, read it at your leisure;
 It comes from Padua, from Bellario:
 There you shall find, that Portia was the doctor;
 Nerrisa there, her clerk: Lorenzo here
 Shall witness, I set forth as soon as you,
 And but e'en now return'd; I have not yet
 Enter'd my house.—Antonio, you are welcome
 And I have better news in store for you
 Than you expect: unseal this letter soon,
 There you shall find three of your argosies
 Are richly come to harbour suddenly (act five, scene one).

Conclusion:

Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* had been put on the Elizabethan stage to educate and entertain the audience along with some parameters like convention, rhetoric, sources, and the spirit of the Age. Such measures are crucial to understanding the Elizabethan drama, in general, and the plays under discussion, in particular. Consequently, the representation of the Jews, Turks, and Christian meant to achieve an end: winning more theatergoers since the drama was the chief entertainment media for the Elizabethan public and it will always be as such.

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