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TAMING OF THE JEW

Marlowe's Barabas Vis-à-vis Shakespeare's Shylock

Written by
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Both Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* present challenges to the contemporary reader or interpreter, with regard to the character of "The Jew" in their plays.[1] The stereotypical reference to Barabas and Shylock as "The Jew," not to mention these characters' opprobrious characteristics and deeds, is problematic in itself. "Marlowe's Barabas, like Shakespeare's Shylock, is a criminal in the making," writes Martin D. Yaffe in his analysis of both Jewish characters in *Shylock and the Jewish Question*: "His crime is also prompted *by his being a Jew*."[2] Yet Shylock can be regarded as a small-time crook, in comparison with Barabas' abominable criminality. As John Gross defines it in his *Shylock: A Legend & its Legacy*, Shakespeare's Jew "has been scaled down and domesticated."[3] Thanks to this act of taming the Jew's character from demonic to sardonic, Shylock has been perceived, both by contemporary critics and theater people of the past two centuries, as a less problematic or more presentable character.

How are the characters of Barabas and Shylock related, and what did the process of "toning down" the Marlovian monster entail? Additionally, since both plays and their Jewish characters evolve around materialism, wouldn't it be proper to evaluate the price that Shakespeare may have paid (on behalf of his "Jew") in this procedure. Furthermore, does a character in a drama necessarily benefit from such a course of "housebreaking"? In order to fully assess the stages in, and implication of, the "taming of the Jew," there is need for basic evaluations of Barabas and Shylock, as well as of the literary and historical sources of both plays. This will set the ground for a discussion of the relationship between the two characters.

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[1] When I use capital T in "The Jew," it refers to the generic or stereotypical concept, rather than the particular character.

[2] Martin D. Yaffe, *Shylock and the Jewish Question* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University press, 1997) 24. My emphasis.

[3] John Gross, *Shylock, A Legend and Its Legacy*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992) 21.

Who is Barabas, what is *The Jew of Malta* and how are they relevant to *The Merchant of Venice*? Marlowe's tragedy gained considerable success (36 performances) when first produced at the Rose Theatre in London in 1592.[4] The protagonist of *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Ievv of Malta*[5] is Barabas, a wealthy Jew who lives on the Mediterranean Island of Malta with his beautiful daughter; from Malta he runs a world-encompassing trading empire. Once his possessions are confiscated by the corrupt Catholic governor of the Island (who demands that he convert to Christianity), in order to defend Malta from the Turks, the dispossessed Jew is swept into a whirlwind of revenge, and turns into a serial killer; he assists the Turkish army to conquer Malta, is appointed its governor, but ends up falling into his own trap, a boiling cauldron, where he dies, cursing his world and its creator.

In comparison, Shakespeare's Jew in MV[6] (written 1594-8) is considerably more tolerable. Shylock, too, is a rich Jew, who raises his only daughter in a Mediterranean port-city, and who serves as a moneylender who profits from the high interest he charges the Christian merchants. Like Barabas, the contempt and humiliation he must endure from his Christian surroundings drive him to the frenzy of a single vengeful obsession: he is determined to cut off one pound of flesh from the body of Antonio, his debtor. Unlike Barabas however, Shylock is stopped before a single drop of blood is shed, and although he, too, is severely punished (and his possessions are confiscated by the Christian authorities), he lives on, to bear his shame.

What is the connection between the two plays? MV is definitely *not* an adaptation of JM. John Mitchell, who claims in his populist book *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* that Marlowe was among the profusion of Shakespeare's "ghost writers," does not include MV among Marlowe's contributions to the Shakespearean canon.[7] Both playwrights definitely relied upon the same two popular perceptions of "The Jew" at their time. On the one hand, they both counted on the "stage Jew" stock-character of those days: "Any actor could put on a 'jew's nose' (…) to play

[4] Christopher Marlowe (N. W. Bawcutt, ed. and intro.), *The Jew of Malta* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) 1.

[5] Title page, ibid.

[6] The title on the first Quarto from 1600 was "The most excellent / Historie of the *Merchant* / *of Venice.* / Vvith the extreame crueltie of *Shylocke* the Iewe (…)." William Shakespeare (John Russel Brown, ed. and intro.), *The Merchant of Venice* (Walton on Themes, Surrey: Arden Shakespeare, [1955] 1997) xi.

[7] John Mitchell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996) 227-40.

Marlowe's Barabas or Shakespeare's Shylock."[8] On the other hand, since both playwrights lived in a relatively "Jew-free" England, they must have been inspired, partly, by the real-life figure of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez, a "New Christian" immigrant from Portugal, who was nonetheless considered a Jew, and had gained the prestigious position of Queen Elizabeth's personal physician. [9] But whereas Marlowe's character and his plot may have also been inspired by the historical model of Don Yossef Nasi, The Jewish Duke of Naxos (see below), [10] Shakespeare based MV on three literary sources. The first, irrelevant to this comparative discussion, is the story of three caskets; the second is a tale, which appeared in various forms since 1200 in Italy, about the villainous Jewish moneylender who asks for a bond in the form of a pound of flesh. [11] The third source is Marlowe's play, which had gained immense popularity on the Elizabethan stage. To cast away any doubt, Shakespeare openly alludes to Marlowe's original when Shylock says, "I have a daughter; / Would any of the stock of *Barrabas* / Had been her husband." (MV, IV:1, my emphasis).[12]

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[8] Gary Taylor, "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages." In Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 11. The use of "jew" with a small case (as a generic term) is Taylor's.

[9] On Lopez: James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 36; and several others.

[10] On the Nasi legacy: Cecil Roth, *The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1948). On the Sources that were available to Marlowe: Bawcutt's introduction, Christopher Marlowe (N. W. Bawcutt, ed. and intro.), *The Jew of Malta* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, The Revels Plays, 1990) 7.

[11] Shakespeare, most likely, relied on the 1587 version from Rome. A detailed list of various versions of the tale is listed in "The Shylock Legend, 1200-1587" in Jacob Rader Marcus (Mark Saperstein, ed. and intro.), *The Jew in the Medieval World, a Source Book: 315-1791* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, [1938] 1999) 421-427. The origins of names of other Jews mentioned in both plays is interesting, but irrelevant for this comparative project.

[12] Barabas of the New Testament is the thief whose life was spared while Jesus Christ was crucified. The names of the other three leading Jewish characters in both plays are also inspired by biblical sources. Shylock, coined by Shakespeare, could refer to the city of Shiloh, in which the Ark of the Covenant was installed before King David built Jerusalem as the Capital; biblical Abigail (Barabas' daughter, the literal meaning of the name is "father of joy") is a married woman who betrays her husband, Naval (villain) the Carmelite, and marries the young rebel David; and Jessica's name could be derived from Jesse, David's father. A summary and further suggestions for the sources of names in MV in Joan Ozark Holmer, *The Merchant of Venice: Choice, Hazard and Consequence* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 28, 70, 78, 86, etc. JM quotations are from Christopher Marlowe (N. W. Bawcutt, ed. and intro.), *The Jew of Malta* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, The Revels Plays, 1990). MV quotations are from William Shakespeare (John Russel Brown, ed. and intro.), *The Merchant of Venice, the Arden Shakespeare* (Walton on Themes, Surrey: Arden Shakespeare, [1955] 1997). Harry Levin, in *The Overreacher*, quotes several additional Shakespearean-Marlovian cross-references, and suggests that "[t]hough the cross reference seems to bring out the worst in both Shakespeare and Marlowe, it manages

The similarities in both plays are not confined to the setup but relate as well to the theatrical interpretation: it is noteworthy that despite the reliance on the comic stock-character of the Jew, used by both playwrights, in spite of the black humor in JM[13] and the fact that MV is categorized among Shakespeare's comedies, the leading roles in both plays were originally portrayed by the two finest dramatic actors of the Elizabethan stage: Edward Alleyn (Barabas) and his rival Richard Burbage (Shylock.)[14]

Ellen Schiff, writing about the tradition of the stage Jew, notes that,

> [I]t is hardly remarkable that *The Merchant of Venice*, like *The Jew of Malta* (…) should deal with usury when excesses in lending and forfeiture were gouging Englishmen. Similarly predictable is the use of the reprehensible Jew to set off the generous, merciful Christians.[15]

A superficial glance might perceive here, erroneously, two almost identical twins out of some comedy: two despicable, rich Jewish characters at the center of a conflict in a mercantile society of a Mediterranean city, lose their money and pride, are even abandoned by their only daughters (who convert to Christianity), are obsessed by revenge and are severely punished by the Christian society that regains thereby its harmonious order; both are repulsive clowns fit to be realized on stage by dramatic actors. Yet it is necessary to distinguish between the two, as well as between the setups and the authors. Barabas's creator is Marlowe, the anarchist-atheist,[16] his advocate on stage is the devilish Machevil, the prologue, and his crimes are several murders and treason. Shakespeare, acting as Shylock's poetic attorney, reduces his Jew's crimes to misdemeanor. No drop of blood is shed in MV, and the gory tragedy is transformed into a somber comedy with a happy ending. It is almost as if Shakespeare succeeded in taming the

to be characteristic of both." Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952) 63, 68.

[13] T. S. Eliot insists upon regarding *The Jew of Malta* as a wild farce. T. S. Eliot, "Christopher Marlowe." in *Selected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber and Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1964.

[14] Joseph Jacobs and Edgar Mels, "Barabas," in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: 1901-1916. www.jewishencyclopedia.com); Taylor, ibid.

[15] Ellen Schiff, *From Stereotype to Metaphor: The Jew in Contemporary Drama* (Albany: State University of new York Press, 1982) 11.

[16] See Paul H. Kocher, "Marlowe's Atheist Lecture," in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (XXXIX), Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1940.

murderous monster ("everybody's bogyman"[17]) into a domesticated, though annoying, beast. According to Yaffe, the dichotomy goes beyond the Jewish characters into the realm of their faiths and tribes. Whereas

> Shylock's turning to criminal behavior is, at least in the eyes of the highest authorities of his city, tantamount to his stepping outside the bounds of recognized Jewish teaching (…) In the eyes of Barabas and his fellow denizens of Marlow's Malta, however, the distinction between Jewishness and criminality is of no comparable importance.[18]

But what did this process of redeeming the criminal Jew or his "taming" actually entail? What price did the character of the despised Jew have to pay in order to be pardoned on stage, and to be repeatedly revived in the theater?[19] To use yet another metaphor from one of the plays, what will our findings be when the two characters are placed on the literary scales? The following comparisons, that will cover very different viewpoints (such as literary, theatrical, or historical), will be conducted on various levels, in order to fully evaluate the implication of the process of the "domestication."

The Jews in Mercantile Societies. "Which is the merchant here, and which – the Jew?" (MV IV:1) is the appropriate question with which to begin this series of evaluations. The first step in the process of domestication, taken by Shakespeare, is to be found in the (shortened version of the) title he gave his play. Both plays are titled in a similar fashion: "The XXX of (location name)." In Marlowe's case, XXX stands for "Jew," and refers to Barabas, the rich, materialistic (and covetous) *merchant*. In Shakespeare's title, "Merchant" is indeed the equivalent of Marlowe's "Jew." However, Shakespeare's Jew, Shylock, though undeniably rich, materialistic (and covetous), is *not* the merchant in the play. He is the usurer, the unproductive moneylender. The merchant is Antonio, both protagonist and Christian. Shylock is a mere secondary character. The dichotomy between merchant and Jew and the similarities between Marlowe's

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[17] As defined by Schiff, 7.

[18] Yaffe, 24-5.

[19] *JM* is rarely produced nowadays. In the second half of the twentieth century, for instance, the Royal Shakespeare Company mounted only two productions of the controversial play. An interesting account of a nineteenth century high quality stage realization of Barabas by Edmund Kean (who portrayed the Jew as a sympathetic figure) can be found in Levin, 63.

and Shakespeare's merchants, are evident from the first scene of MV. An early speech in MV bears many similarities to the following verses in the JM opening scene:

> But now how stands the wind?
> Into what corner peers my halcyon's bill?
> Ha, to the east? Yes: see how stand the vanes!
> East and by south; why then, I hope my ships
> I sent for Egypt and the bordering isles
> Are gotten up by Nilus' winding banks:
> Mine argosy from Alexandria,
> Loaden with spice and silks, now under sail,
> Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore
> To Malta, through our Mediterranean sea. (JM I:1)

And one of its corresponding texts from MV*:*

> Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
> There, where your argosies with portly sail,
> Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
> Or as it were, the pageants of the sea,
> Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
> That curtsy to them (do them reverence)
> As they fly by them with their woven wings. (MV I:1)

These are two speeches of merchants, or mercantile heroes, who yearn for their ships (their argosies) to return safely to their homeports with their cargoes intact.[20] Here lies the essential difference between Barabas and Shylock: in Marlowe's play, these are the opening lines of the Jew Barabas, a tycoon and a fearless entrepreneur in renaissance terms. But in Shakespeare's play, the Venetian merchant to whom Salerio alludes is the Christian Antonio, Shylock's rival. Shylock is condensed to fit the requirements of an anti-Jewish stereotype: an unproductive parasite, who refers to himself as a 'land rat', refraining from any involvement in commercial ventures. Is Barabas to be compared with Antonio, then? Can we claim that Shakespeare might have divided Barabas between Shylock and Antonio, since Barabas as a single character was too much to handle? And wouldn't such an action constitute the first sign in the process of "reducing" the stage Jew?

[20] The Argosy is the "state of the art" ship, an audacious, innovative, fashionable name, which was coined in the Ragusa seaport. Argos, in Greek mythology, is Jason's ship, upon which he sailed in search of the Golden Fleece, received a magic potion from the witch Medea, with which he reaped the lethal warriors who grew out of dragon's teeth, married Medea, and after deserting her she slew their children. Several references to various motifs of the myth (from greed to child sacrifice) are found in both plays.

Fact and Fiction. Another interesting divergence is to be found in the two authors' attitude towards documentation and poetic license. Paradoxically, Marlowe, inspired by the life story and adventures of a real three-dimensional person (Nasi), stretched reality and converted his Jew into a larger-than-life megalomaniac extrovert. Shakespeare, whose main sources were literary (and thus two-dimensional) is the one who, as a faithful trainer, refined the caricature, took away both its inhuman monstrosities and its colorful spectrum, in order to present an introverted gray person. Nasi, Marlowe's main inspiration, was a Marano Jew who fled the Catholic Iberian Peninsula and became a senior advisor to the Turkish Sultan. Thanks to his brilliance, the Ottoman Empire conquered a number of islands in the Mediterranean, and he himself was knighted, and has been remembered as a Jewish hero. Though hardly any Jews had lived in England since the thirteenth century, Marlowe may have had a good chance to meet authentic, proud Jews in person. Having been employed as a spy in Her Majesty's secret service, the playwright wrote JM shortly after his return from a long stay in Holland, where, in those very years, a liberated, autonomous congregation of Jews (fleeing from the tortures of the Iberian Inquisition) was beginning to flourish.[21] True, Shakespeare probably shared a single real-life source of inspiration with Marlowe: Rodrigo Lopez, the Queen's physician. But while this information about the celebrated Jewish doctor was significant for Marlowe in 1592, by the time Shakespeare was to compose his own Jewish play, the course of Lopez' fortune had veered: he was tried for treason (an attempt to poison the Queen) and was sentenced to death. Stephen Greenblatt, in his article "Shakespeare's Leap," interprets the Londoners' reaction to Lopez's execution as "a last act of a comedy": "These laughing spectators, in other words, thought they were watching a real-life version of *The Jew of Malta*."[22] One should not disregard the sharp turn in Lopez's reputation (after JM and prior to MV) as a factor in the playwrights' attitude to "the Jews." The same person was at first looked-up to, and then looked-down on. Here we may find the most vivid real-life equivalent to the fall of "the Jew," as it is portrayed respectively in both plays.

Opposite axes. The focal points or courses of action in the plays are strikingly different. Barabas, the megalomaniac, keeps expanding and growing (to monstrous sizes), from a wealthy

[21] On Marlowe's secret service career and Holland adventure: Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Jonathan Cape and Picador, 1992) 234-9.

[22] Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare's leap," In *The New York Times*. 9/12/2004.

merchant (who even manages to multiply his wealth despite it being confiscated) to a murderer, a serial killer, a warrior and a sovereign doomed to crash tragically. The tamed Shylock not only loses, gradually, one property after another (daughter, ducats, dignity, his dead wife's ring, his revenge, his Jewish identity), but he, at the same time, is narrowing his focus more and more until his entire being is dedicated to one obsession: a single pound of flesh.

***Genres: From High to Low*.** The transition from tragedy to comedy entails in itself a reduction. It is true that by relocating the Jewish conflict from the realm of tragedy to that of comedy, the fatherly author gains an instant pardon for his fictional Jew: since death is rarely an option on the comic stage, Shylock is neither able to shed Antonio's blood, nor is his own life in mortal danger. But then, the scope of tragedy is traditionally considered superior to that of comedy, from Aristotle's *Poetics* on. Or as Northrop Frye defines it, tragedy is "the high mimetic mode," whereas the comic/ironic mode is inferior and "low."[23] Hence, another dent in Shylock's status.

The Jews' "Fathers." In line with Jeffrey Masten's treatment of the renaissance author as a source of authorship and a literary father figure in *Textual Intercourse*,[24] it may be interesting to compare (now and below) a few aspects in the two playwrights' affection for their stage Jews, the wild and the tamed. True, Marlowe thrusts Barabas into the pit and a tormented death, whereas Shakespeare saves Shylock's life, but what can be said about the quality of stage-life the usurer enjoys before and after his exit? Gross opens his comparison between the two Jewish characters with the striking verbal similarity in the two fathers' outcries: "O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my Bliss!" (JM II:1) "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!" (MV II:8).[25] But what a difference: whereas Barabas' line is an expression of glee when his daughter retrieves his hidden treasure, Shylock's is a lamentation over his daughter's betrayal (on the Jews as fathers, see below). "My daughter! O my ducats!" is one of Shylock's two most memorable lines in MV, while "O girl, O gold" is not considered one of Barabas' most quoted speeches. Harry Levin, in one of the appendices to *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe*, provides statistics on

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[23] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, [1957] 1967) 34-5.

[24] Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 64-7.

[25] Gross, 19-20.

the percentage of lines given to protagonists in Marlowe's plays. Barabas was endowed with a record number of lines, that take up 49 percent of the total lines in JM (exceeding even Doctor Faustus' 47%), compared to Hamlet's less than 38% of the total lines in the Shakespearian revenge tragedy.[26] Shylock is not only inferior in the quantity of his lines, but most strikingly in their quality. The daughter/ducats speech, attributed to Shylock in our collective memory, is actually delivered by a minor character, Solanio (who, with his stage twin, Salerio, functions as one half of a two-dimensional caricature-duo), who quotes Shylock. The Jew's most dramatic speech is indeed delivered by Shylock himself:

> Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? (MV III:1)

However, it is noteworthy that most of Shylock's lines (unlike those of Barabas), including the potent "Hath not a Jew eyes?" are written in prose, and this is not to be attributed to Shakespeare's recklessness or lack of creativity. Shakespeare is significantly thrifty with regard to the attributes he bestows on his creature: Shylock does not open the play, is not given any momentous poetry, and makes a hasty exit before the end of Act IV, to be succeeded by an entire act of love and romance, celebrated by the other characters. Barabas, like Marlowe's other protagonists (Faustus and Tamburlaine in particular, also Edward II), is a doomed tragic hero who not only defies his own fate, but also the laws of nature. Whereas according to the Shakespearean canon, Shylock resembles, if you will, Malvolio of *Twelfth Night*. Both are dark-gray characters who do not fit the colorful world of romance that surrounds them, are cruelly punished (in the plot) once they try to cross their boundaries, and make an ugly insignificant exit before the beginning of the other characters' festivities, without any salvation (an even crueler punishment in terms of theatricality). So ungrateful is Shylock's exit, that Edwin Booth, one of the celebrated nineteenth century Shylocks, in his attempt to elevate or upgrade the Jew's character from a minor comic to a tragic hero, "generally dispensed entirely with Act Five," and billed the play "Shylock" as a way of retrieving the lost tragic values deprived from the character by its author.[27] In a similar manner, Michael Radford, in his 2004 film adaptation of

[26] Levin, 186.

[27] Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997) 22-3.

MV, complemented the dearth of Shylock's presence by a number of additional silent scenes or shots,[28] reinforcing the Jew's presence.[29] Such is the opening scene on the Rialto, in which Shylock (Al Pacino) is introduced as Antonio (Jeremy Irons) spits in his face; Shylock is later shown in a rainy night shot, as he is mumbling "My daughter! O my ducats!" while the speech is delivered by Solanio's voiceover; the fifth act in the film -- if not cut altogether as in Booth's adaptation -- is drastically shortened, and is wrapped up with yet another silent shot on Shylock the convert, locked out of the Jewish as well as the Christian worlds. Thus Shylock is endowed with the entrance, exit and monologue of which Shakespeare deprived him.

The Jews as Fathers. In the seemingly similar setup of the two plays, both Jews raise their beautiful daughters on their own. But whereas Barabas is fortunate to have Abigail, a faithful daughter who deserts her father only after he turns into a monster (that very monster who would later kill his own daughter), Jessica hates her father, elopes with her Christian lover, despises anything that is related to Judaism, converts, and even sells for a trifle her parents' precious ring. The price for the redemption of Shylock's daughter's life is paid already in Jessica's very first lines, "I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so: / Our house is hell" (MV II:3); whereas Barabas' daughter Abigail declares in her first scene, "Nor for myself, but aged Barabas, / Father, for thee lamenteth Abigail." (JM I:2), and her life ends when her vengeful father concocts the poison for his own flesh and blood, using imagery not to be found in Shylock's world:

> The juice of Hebon and Cocytus' breath,
> And all the poisons of the Stygian pool,
> Break from the fiery kingdom, and in this
> Vomit your venom, and envenom her
> That, like a fiend, hath left her father thus!" (JM III:4)

The Jews' Heavenly Fathers. Though Barabas alludes in the former speech to Greco-Roman mythology, both he and Shylock refer constantly to biblical allusions (from the Hebrew Bible). But whereas Barabas wishes to take part in Patriarch Abraham's blessed fortune ("And thus are we on every side enriched; / These are the blessings promised to the Jews, / And

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[28] Silent, in order not to add any lines to Shakespeare's verse (according to the unwritten twentieth century convention, that allows cuts but permits no additional text in Shakespeare stage and screen productions).

[29] Michael Radford (dir., screenplay), *The Merchant of Venice*, USA: 2004.

herein was old Abram's happiness" JM I:1), Shylock's source of biblical inspiration, in relation to his loan to Antonio, is another patriarch, Jacob, who cunningly tricked his treacherous uncle Laban, and reaped an exceedingly high "interest" while working for him. Shylock alludes to a plot of trickery, usury, mistrust, profit: "When Jacob graz'd his uncle Laban's sheep, --" / (…) And *thrift* is blessing if men steal it not." (MV I:3, my emphasis). Shortly after the first scene, Barabas turns to yet another biblical figure, but this time he refuses to identify himself with the grand (almost tragic) and heroic Job and his acceptance of calamities and fate.[30] Shylock makes (as aforementioned) an insignificant exit, uttering his un-famous last words, "Send the deed after me, / And I will sign it," (MV IV:1) to be followed by an entirely Jewish-free romantic-comedic fifth act. Quite different from Barabas, who is given a heroic fall, and crashes with the final infamous acceptance of Job's fate and the poetic line "Die, life: fly, soul; tongue, curse thy fill and die! (JM V:4).[31]

The Reckoning and the Authors' Gift of Life. Since Barabas, earlier in that act, in a moment of realization of his imminent doom, reflects upon an Aesop fable,[32] it seems relevant to quote another of Aesop's fables, *The Wolf and the House-Dog*, a classic parable about the price of domesticity, that may be useful for Shylock's case:

> A wolf, meeting a big well-fed Mastiff with a wooden collar about his neck asked him who it was that fed him so well and yet compelled him to drag that heavy log about wherever he went.
> "The master," he replied.
> Then said the wolf: "May no friend of mine ever be in such a plight; for the weight of this chain is enough to spoil the appetite."[33]

Levin provides an account of the price on the reckoning of the "taming of the Jew":

> Between revenge and romance, between tragedy and comedy, *The Merchant of Venice* provides a Shakespearean compromise. It gives the benediction of a happy ending to the legend of the Jew's daughter; and it allows the Jewish protagonist, for better or for worse, his day in court. Legalism both narrows and humanizes

[30] Levin suggests another biblical connection to Barabas: his dozen murders are revenges according to the biblical "an eye for an eye" commandment. Levin, 59.

[31] Compare to Job 2:9: "Curse God and die."

[32] "For he that liveth in authority, / And neither gets him friends nor fills his bags, / Lives like the ass that Aesop speaketh of," (JM V:2).

[33] Fables of Aesop, http://oaks.nvg.org/fam.html.

> Shylock, in contradistinction to Barabas, who for the most part lives outside the law and does not clamor for it until it has overtaken him. In rounding off the angles and mitigating the harshness of Marlowe's caricature, Shakespeare loses something of its intensity.[34]

Greenblatt, when he tries to imagine a poet's reaction, believes that Shakespeare's insight into the images of the infamous Dr. Lopez's execution was in breathing life into the stereotype. "He wrote out what he imagined such a twisted man, about to be destroyed, would inwardly say: 'I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?'" [35] But whereas the Bard of Stratford definitely endowed his Jew with life, *a petty* life, his predecessor, as Gross sums it up, bestowed upon his own Jew a great deal more: "it is hard not to feel that Marlowe put a good deal of *himself* into Barabas – his power fantasies, his dynamism, his scorn for received opinion."[36]

Was Shakespeare's motivation in the domestication of "The Jew" derived from his fundamentally more refined attitude, or did he wish to fit the illimitable savage into the paradigm of the pound-of-flesh story? In perspective he succeeded, indeed, in creating a character of a Jew, who is still controversial, yet is tame or human enough to be reinterpreted and tolerable in the theater. He definitely gave enough life to "The Jew" to make him more than a clownish cliché. However, Marlowe, though creating a monster that is larger than life, and in many ways too hard to handle, gave his own creation significantly more. As Levin notes, Barabas, like his namesake of the New Testament, is an insurrectionist, and Marlowe takes his side.[37] The hypothetical question that remains unanswered is whether *all* the above-discussed trimmings (from Barabas to Shylock) were necessary, or if, perhaps, by robbing "The Jew" of his given magnificence and poetic self, poetic justice was indeed attained. Perchance Shakespeare strove to perform his operation of the scaling-down of "The Jew" according to Portia's (as Doctor Balthazar) guidelines: an operation that is to involve no shred of excess flesh and not a single drop of blood. Such a complex operation also leaves a lot less room for awe, as well as for commiseration or compassion for "The Jew." Shakespeare, artfully and humanely, succeeded in shrinking Marlowe's fire-spitting dragon, and ended up with the one who calls himself a rat.

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[34] Levin, 72.

[35] Greenblatt, *New York Times*.

[36] Gross, 21. My emphasis.

[37] Levin, 64.

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