

# Public and Private Prosperity

## Setting the Scene for Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*

### Prologue

*Rodrigo Lopez, a Jewish-Portuguese doctor, driven from the country of his birth by the Inquisition, had come to England at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign and set up as a doctor in London. Leicester and Walsingham were his patients. In 1586 he was made physician-in-chief to the Queen. In a libellous pamphlet against Leicester it was hinted that he had served that nobleman all too well - by distilling his poisons for him.*

*[Under interrogation, Lopez], broke down and confessed "that he had indeed spoken of this matter [the Queen's murder] and promised it, but all to cozen the King of Spain". He said that it was at Secretary Walsingham's behest that he had established contact with the Spanish Court, and explained that the Secretary had used him to pass false information to the enemy.*

**The Lopez Plot ([www.tudorplace.com](http://www.tudorplace.com))<sup>1</sup>**

*The Emperor Bajazet 'hath with him a cunning Jew, professing Physick, who is employed by Selimus to poison Bajazet':*

*I warrant you my gracious sovereign,  
He shall be quickly sent unto his grave,  
For I have potions of so strong a force,  
That whoever touches them shall die. (He then speaks aside)  
And would your grace once but taste of them  
I could as willingly afford them you.*

**The Tragical Reign of Selimus<sup>2</sup>**

*In 1590, the Protestant English attempted to enlist Muslim assistance 'to seize Malta from its Spanish Overlords'. In this venture, the English were employing the double-agent David Passi, a Jewish-Italian, but the plan was aborted in March of 1591 when it was discovered that Passi had warned King Philip of Spain, and 'offered to avert the expedition for money.*

**Another Country: Marlowe & the Go-Between<sup>3</sup>**

Following the 1591 failure of the Protestant English attempt to dislodge the Spanish from Malta, and the continuing Crown restrictions on entrepreneurial expansion and freedom of speech: Enter Kit Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* to apply physick to Queen Elizabeth's 'policy' of personal security and stifling suppression.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Documents/lopez\\_plot.htm](http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Documents/lopez_plot.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Robert Greene, *The Tragical Reign of Selimus* (1594) General Books Edition, 2009)

<sup>3</sup> *Another Country: Marlowe and the Go-Between*: Richard Wilson in *Renaissance Go-Betweens*, Ed. A. Hofele & W. von Kopponfells (W. de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2005).

## Marlowe's Jew of Malta

In his book, *Faustus & the Censor: The English Faust Book & Marlowe's Dr. Faustus*,<sup>4</sup> William Empson affirmed that Christopher Marlowe's play of *Doctor Faustus* was censored and repressed from public performance, with Marlowe subsequently suffering a loss of social status and being forced to live in reduced financial circumstances. The details of this censorship may never be known, but in 1591, the time of writing *The Jew of Malta*, its author would be living with the consequences of this attack on his professional and personal position. These consequences are likely to have included the loss of Thomas Walsingham's household patronage and a general loss of support and encouragement from members of Walter Raleigh's circle of friends, for whom Marlowe's previous work had identified him as a standard bearer for the 'New Learning,' which sought to extend the knowledge of classical thinkers in the arts, sciences, commerce and social/political evolution.<sup>5</sup>

In *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe's Prologue and opening scene evoke a comprehensive critique of the creative context of the play's authorial production. Marlowe's Prologue is delivered by Machiavelli, who assures the audience that his spirit is still alive:

*Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps,  
And, now the Guise is dead, is come from France  
To view this land and frolic with his friends.*

### The Jew of Malta - Prologue 2-4

Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* had featured the Duke of Guise, who employed Machiavellian strategies to further his ambition for power, so that the reference to him here suggests *The Jew of Malta* was Marlowe's next dramatic production. Machiavelli's spirit is leaving the Guise's homeland of France to 'view this land' (England), where he apparently already has some 'friends'.

Machiavelli's Prologue categorises the attitudes of his followers and his enemies. He notes that he is 'Admired' by those that hate me most'. Some of these will

*... speak openly against my books,  
Yet will they read me and thereby attain  
To Peter's chair ... '*

### The Jew of Malta - Prologue 10-12

Machiavelli's political advice was addressed to the secular 'Prince', who would use religion to obtain general popularity and obedience, rather than seeking religious office. Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, so that the reference to 'Peter's chair' implies that Machiavellian tactics are being applied by an

<sup>4</sup> W.W. Empson, *Faustus & the Censor: The English Faust Book and Marlowe's Doctor Faustus* (Blackwell, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> For example, see A.D.Wraight & V.F.Stern, *In Search of Christopher Marlowe* (Adam Hart, 1993) - pp.136-176.

ambitious cleric, and the 'Bishop' who would conform to this inference is Archbishop Whitgift, who has been accorded an absolute authority by Queen Elizabeth. All courtly households were required to pledge allegiance to Whitgift's authority.<sup>6</sup>

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* had inveighed against the 'ceremonial toy' of marriage and characterised a contract of physical and ideological submission as a pact with the Devil, providing an implicit opposition to any notions of an arranged marriage for his patron Thomas Walsingham, and any suppression of 'New Learning' in favour of the pseudo-religious dogma of Archbishop Whitgift. In his *Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe tracked the movement of Whitgift's social and political regression back to its sponsor Queen Elizabeth,<sup>7</sup> and in the writing of his *Jew of Malta*, Marlowe is living with the consequences of his opposition, projecting his perspective of this regression and its social and political consequences.

Machiavelli introduces a fundamental creative element of the play, as he observes that, having attained 'Peter's chair,' the occupant is subsequently 'poisoned by my climbing followers.' The notion of violence begetting violence is mentioned several times in the play and generates its narrative construction.

After associating Machiavellian tactics with an 'ambitious cleric,' Machiavelli labels 'religion' as 'but a childish toy' and asserts that 'there is no sin but ignorance.' If we maintain the connection of Machiavellianism with the 'ambitious cleric', the suggestion is that the social and ideological authority of Whitgift may be deconstructed to demonstrate the self-serving savagery of its moral virtue and its social propriety. As a 'toy,' religion is being used as a creative tool of social empowerment, where theft and murder are no longer sins, as the only sin is 'ignorance'. This ignorance is a punishable offence when an individual is unaware that the apparent virtue of religion hides a process of savage retribution for those who simply question its wisdom.

Glancing at suggestions of the ultimate suppression, Machiavelli characterises such whisperings with *Birds of the air will tell of murders past! I am ashamed to hear such fooleries*. The regressive recourse to murders of 'the past' implies that such behaviour is not held to be a current practice, with the notion of 'shame' being naturally incurred by the assumption that such 'fooleries' may have occurred in the past but would not form part of future political statecraft. This 'shame' would be characteristic of a time of liberal expansion, such as that of the 1580s, when there was talk of a more modern society, where arbitrary state-sponsored murders might be assumed to be part of a barbarous past.

---

<sup>6</sup> Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe & the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1986) - pp30-142.

<sup>7</sup> Garnet Marriot, *Loyalty & Freedom in Marlowe's 'Massacre at Paris'* in *The Marlowe Society Newsletter 35*, Autumn 2010 (<http://www.marlowe-society.org/pubs/newsltr/newsltr35.html>).

But a potential absolute authority is still vested in the Crown, though the basis of this authority may be called into question. In his play of *The Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe's text drew the distinction between monarchical desires and concerns, and the 'good of the country' as a whole.<sup>8</sup> In Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Machiavelli briefly moves the argument on to question the fundamental basis of monarchical power, observing that:

*Many will talk of title to a crown;  
What right had Caesar to the empery?*

**The Jew of Malta - Prologue 18-19<sup>9</sup>**

However, Machiavelli doesn't expand on the issue of Caesar's right to authority. He goes on to imply a historical basis for the right to absolute authority, reminding the audience that

*Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure  
When, like the Draco's, they were writ in blood.*

**The Jew of Malta - Prologue 20-21**

When there is no organising social authority, an absolute authority has the potential to create an organised society, so absolute monarchy may be justified by the resulting social organisation and peaceful social development. This argument acknowledges the historical social function of conventional beliefs whilst insisting on the need to recognise the constructed artificiality of such conventions in order to develop further the creative imagination and the evolution of society itself.<sup>10</sup>

Machiavelli's reference to Draco identifies the Crown as a potential purveyor of arbitrary and petty savagery, as Draco was an 'Athenian statesman whose code (of 621 B C) punished even the most trivial offences by death'.<sup>11</sup> After briefly questioning the authority of the Crown ("What right had Caesar to the empery?"), Machiavelli confirms the efficacy of the Draconian manner and adds the implication that:

*Hence comes it that a strong-built citadel  
Commands much more than letters can import.*

**The Jew of Malta - Prologue 22-23**

That is to say, arbitrary absolute power cannot be defeated simply by intellectual learning and reasoned argument. Marlowe himself has become a victim of petty absolutism and his 'defeated' reduced circumstances are a result of the Draconian measures employed by Archbishop Whitgift, rather than a reflection of his intellectual inability and lack of 'lettered learning'.

<sup>8</sup> Marriot, op.cit, *Loyalty & Freedom*: "The Duke of Guise ... makes the distinction between 'the country' and its present rulers, advising that people should 'rather choose to seek your country's good / Than pity or relieve these upstart heretics.'"

<sup>9</sup> See Extended Note 1 at the end of this document.

<sup>10</sup> See Extended Note 2 at the end of this document.

<sup>11</sup> *Readers' Digest Universal Dictionary* (Readers' Digest, 1994) - p.467.

Machiavelli then attributes the 'error' of attending to 'letters' and neglecting Machiavellian notions of preserving or extending political power to the 6th Century Sicilian tyrant Phalaris, who was subsequently executed in his own torture device, the Brazen Bull.<sup>12</sup> This idea exemplifies the notion of violence begetting violence, and offers a narrative and dramatic mechanism incorporating a poetic justice appropriate to the concerns of Marlowe's text. As Marlowe's selection of Draco provided a particular relevance to the existing social context of Whitgift's arbitrary and savage suppression (the use of the death penalty for trivial offences) so Marlowe's Phalaris example invites a corresponding comparison. Phalaris attained power by 'taking advantage of his position as builder of the temple of Zeus Atabyrius, to make himself despot. On the northern coast of Sicily, the people of Himera elected him General with absolute power, in spite of the warnings of the poet Stesichorus.'<sup>13</sup> It could be said that Archbishop Whitgift was similarly taking advantage of his position to attain a personal absolute power as part of his remit to protect the Queen's person and status, and Marlowe himself had inveighed against this tendency in his dramatic presentation of the fortunes of Doctor Faustus.

The Phalaris example has a further relevance in that the worship of Zeus Atabyrius involved human sacrifice, but Phalaris used human execution as a secular criminal punishment. He brought Sicily a great degree of social and political stability and economic prosperity, even patronising philosophy and literature, i.e. he presents a similar figure to Marlowe's Tamburlaine, instigating a secular intellectual development succeeding more 'primitive' religious bases of authority. Therefore, if the 16<sup>th</sup> century world is likewise evolving into a similar secular enlightenment, it might be appropriate if such a 16<sup>th</sup> century new world followed the Phalaris example and dispensed with Whitgift using a secular conscription of Whitgift's own repressively savage 'religious' imposition.

The enthusiastic detachment of Machiavelli's analysis expresses a relatively stabilised creative resolution following Marlowe's loss of patronage after Whitgift's move to deprive him of a living within the society of the aristocracy. Whitgift's censorship committee was convened in 1589 specifically to censor and suppress the work of 'dissidents,' with the committee being given the power to deprive any writers of their living if they refused to amend their work appropriately. This deprivation could be achieved by simply advising Marlowe's lordly patron of his standing with the Queen's committee of approval, so that the best that could be hoped for would be a series of temporary household appointments until the situation of 'disapproval' was resolved in some way.

---

<sup>12</sup> The Brazen Bull was invented by Perillos for Phalaris, tyrant of Akragas, Sicily. The victim was placed inside the bull and the bull heated so that the victim was roasted alive. Phalaris himself is said to have been killed in the brazen bull when he was overthrown by Telemachus. Some Christian Saints were executed in the bull, including Saint Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazen\\_bull](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazen_bull).

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.nndb.com/people/837/000097546/>

In *The Jew of Malta* Marlowe uses the creatively appropriate figure of the Jew Barabas, who makes a living from his wits, outside the conventions of aristocratic patronage and approved modes of etiquette and social behaviour. So the play provides a creative potential for moving beyond a contesting or bemoaning of personal circumstance, towards a defiant and witty acceptance of obtaining circumstance with a practical appeal to the audience of the public theatre.

In Machiavelli's dismissive

*O! th' poor petty wits  
Let me be envied and not pitied!*

**The Jew of Malta - Prologue 26-27**

we may discern Marlowe's retort to the 'petty wits' of Church and University who were regarding him with a combination of pity and disdain. Marlowe doesn't want their 'pity'. He prefers the 'envy' he experienced at the reception of his *Tamburlaine* plays and perhaps will be working to invoke such envy again.

Machiavelli's subsequent question, '*But whither am I bound?*' recalls his attention to the practical matter in hand (a theatrical presentation). He is not here 'To read a lecture', because Marlowe no longer serves as New Learning House Writer for the Raleigh circle. (Marlowe was reported as having read the lecture of 'atheism' for Raleigh and his friends.<sup>14</sup>

So Machiavelli concludes his Prologue by announcing

*... the tragedy of a Jew  
Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed*

**The Jew of Malta - Prologue 30-31**

Immediately, we know that the central character of the play has enjoyed worldly success but is to suffer the deprivation of 'tragedy'. His money has been accumulated *not without my means* (Machiavellian practice), but, nevertheless, the audience is invited to:

*... grace him as he deserves,  
And let him not be entertained the worse  
Because he favours me'.*

**The Jew of Malta - Prologue 33-35**

This description and recommendation parallels Marlowe's own worldly success and subsequent deprivation by social exclusion. And just as a closer inspection might reveal that Marlowe has been unfairly treated, so the

---

<sup>14</sup> See for example, *Christopher Marlowe: Complete Plays & Poems*, ed. E.D. Pendry & J.C. Maxwell (Everyman, 1988) - p.512:Richard Chomley 'is reported to have said that Marlowe told him that he hath read the atheist lecture to Sir Walter Raleigh and others'.

audience is invited to assess the Jew's 'desert' themselves, suggesting that their sympathy should not be denied even for an adherent of Machiavellian thought and practice.

The opening scene of Act 1 of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* presents a perspective of a social and political environment much changed from the expansive liberalism of the 1580s. Barabas glories only in the accumulation of his personal wealth. In contrast to the implicit intellectual expansiveness of Tamburlaine's

*Nature ... doth teach us all to have aspiring minds.  
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend  
The wondrous architecture of the world  
And measure every wand'ring planet's course,  
Still climbing after knowledge infinite  
And always moving as the restless spheres,*

**Tamburlaine Part I - 2.7.18-25**

Barabas offers praise to him:

*whose steel-barred coffers are crammed full,  
And all his lifetime hath been tired,  
wearying his fingers' end with telling it,*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.14-16**

By 1592 the liberal expansive and meritocratic dimension of social development has been banished from the dominating ideology. Barabas' notions of science, exploration and intelligent thought are all subordinated to the gathering of personal wealth, within a fawning acquiescence to existing political authority. His evocation of science and exploration and personal aspiration conjures up images of:

*Spanish oils and wine of Greece;  
the merchants of the Indian mines;  
the wealthy Moor, that [can] heap pearl like pebble-stones;*

and:

*bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts, ... sparkling diamonds.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.5, 19, 21-22, 25-27**

with these commodities providing the sole basis for 'judgement':

*thus methinks should men of judgement frame  
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.34-35**

In Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, the Guise offered a personal ambition at one with the strivings of the whole nation:

*Set me to scale the high Pyramides,  
And thereon set the diadem of France,  
I'll either rend it with my nails to nought,  
Or mount the top with my aspiring wings,  
Although my downfall be the deepest hell.'*

#### **The Massacre at Paris - Scene 2.40-44**

This personal and communal ambition may be freely expressed in public, but Barabas' aspirations are purely personal. They are divorced from public expression and communal desires and requirements. Barabas' 'Pyramides' is the steady accumulation of private wealth, and the infinite striving of Tamburlaine's intellect is constrained to confine the 'infinite riches' obtained by science, exploration and human endeavour within 'a little room' of personal gratification.

#### **Francis Walsingham**

Barabas had specifically commended '*the wealthy Moor*' because he can '*Without control pick his riches up*'. In England, this 'control' was exercised by the Crown, which did not allow companies to form and act on their own account. Only Crown-sponsored companies could exist, and these were subject to Crown control and sequestration of revenue. Marlowe's *Jew* may thus be seen to personify a critique of the general situation of politically regressive suppression and of a particular victim of this suppression, the individual venture capitalist who must now suppress the 'modern' notions of power-sharing and commercial development, and restrict his activities to a purely personal accumulation of wealth within the strictures of Crown control. The individual venture capitalist of Marlowe's acquaintance who fits this description is Francis Walsingham, whose Courtly activities in recent years had been restricted to those of 'Spymaster'. And, since 1589, the Queen had starved him of financial support until he died effectively bankrupt in 1590. This action against the Walsinghams from 1589 onwards is paralleled by the Queen's repressive action taken against Walter Raleigh and Christopher Marlowe.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Marlowe's Barabas may be partially seen as a mock satirical figure of Francis Walsingham, acquiescing to government diktat and requirements, whilst being solely dependent on commercial ventures that remained out of his control although he was still required to finance the administration that was destroying him. Walsingham was a major shareholder in commercial ventures such as the Turkey Company, which made vast profits at this time.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> See Extended Note 3 at the end of this document.

<sup>16</sup> See Extended Note 4 at the end of this document.



All the members of the so-called 'Raleigh Circle' would become subject to the kind of restrictions that Marlowe had warned against in his play of *Doctor Faustus*, where Faustus signs articles of acquiescence but is not allowed to freely follow his personal aspirations. He is 'forbidden' to question Lucifer's authority and allowed only the private satisfaction of recreational indulgence and diversion. Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* was written when the effects he warned against had become a constricting reality. The economic stultification of Crown Control exacerbated the effect of increased prices and general inflation, so that even wealthy households could not sustain their living standards. They began to implement cost-cutting measures and dispensing with 'hospitality'. The Duke of Northumberland's scientific investigations became a privately supervised program restricted to the confines of the Tower of London, and Northumberland drew up a family guide of measures to safeguard their existing wealth. Walter Raleigh was subject to imprisonment and house-arrest, and scientist-mathematicians such as Thomas Hariot were likewise constrained to pursue their interests in private isolation. Hariot was one of England's greatest mathematicians, investigating such areas as the solubility of algebraic equations, in which he made significant advances for which he still receives little credit, as his work was subsequently duplicated by European mathematicians who were free to make their work public.

As Barabas is wondering how his own treasure fleets are faring, a merchant enters to let him know that his ships have returned safely, loaded with merchandise. A second merchant gives news of his '*argosy from Alexandria*'. It is '*laden with riches Of Persian silks, of gold, and orient pearl*'. However, he explains that this fleet lacked the conduct of the other ships, as

*... we were wafted by a Spanish fleet  
That never left us till within a league,  
That had the galleys of the Turk in chase.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.95-97**

This snippet of local information suggests a knowledge of the movement of shipping around Malta in the early 1590s, when the English and Spanish struggled for control of such strategic areas. In 1590, the Protestant English attempted to enlist Muslim assistance '*to seize Malta from its Spanish overlords*'. In this venture, the English were employing the double-agent David Passi, a Jewish-Italian, but the plan was aborted in March of 1591 when it was discovered that Passi had warned King Philip of Spain, and '*offered to avert the expedition for money*'.<sup>17</sup> The merchant's image of Spanish ships dispersing the Turkish galleys may thus be a playful reference to the outcome of this situation.

In *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas' Jewish status invokes an elemental evaluative morality that mediates between the earthly environment and human affairs. Barabas ascribes his financial success to '*the blessings promised to the Jews*'

---

<sup>17</sup> Richard Wilson, *Another Country* op.cit.

and again subordinates all human endeavour to the accumulation of wealth, identifying this as the sole source of 'happiness':

*What more may heaven do for earthly men  
...  
ripping the bowels of the earth for them  
making the seas their servant, and the winds  
...  
Who hateth me but for my happiness?  
Or who is honoured now but for his wealth?*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.106-112**

The repressive social and political mechanism responsible for the corresponding situation in contemporary England has been engineered by Queen Elizabeth's policy of personal safety allied with the pseudo-religious regression of Archbishop Whitgift and his supporters, to whom Barabas may be addressing his observation that:

*... I can see no fruits in all their faith  
But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride,  
Which methinks fits not their profession.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.115-117**

The only positive conclusion Barabas can give to such a situation is that,

*Haply some hapless man hath conscience,  
And for his conscience lives in beggary.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.118-119**

In terms of the contemporary parallels to the play's dramatic events, the 'hapless man' with 'conscience' is Marlowe himself, but rather than dwell on his exclusion from polite society and its patronage, he again embraces the fetish of blinkered wealth accumulation, as his Jew Barabas exults in his superiority in this particular activity: 'we have scrambled up More wealth by far than any Christian'. The implication here is that outdated Christian dogma (individual authoritarianism and demonization of monetary 'interest') exercises a relatively stifling effect on the widespread development of processes of wealth creation.

Marlowe's use of the stock Jewish 'man of money' character serves to highlight a perceived change in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals being pressured by the Queen's delegation of an absolute authority to Archbishop Whitgift, whilst facilitating a distanced critique of the nature of this arbitrarily violent imposition. Barabas explains that:

*we come not to be kings;  
... crowns come either by succession  
Or urged by force; and nothing violent,  
Oft have I heard tell, can be permanent.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.128-132**

The notion that violence begets violence is a central image in the play and powers its narrative dramatisation. In particular, it is the monarchy that is identified here as being a perpetrator of imposed 'force' and 'violence', with a disdain for such an institution being expressed by Barabas with:

*Give us a peaceful rule; make Christians kings,  
That thirst so much for principality.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.133-134**

This attitude is perhaps more appropriate for Marlowe himself, who was being associated with a Walter Raleigh-centred plot to aspire to a position of monarchical power.

At the personal level, Marlowe's choice of a Jewish 'man of money', as the central character, with contemporary associations with Walsingham, expresses his own situation as a cast-off from a potential position of financial security and creative fulfilment. Francis Walsingham's status as a financier and venture capitalist was compromised by his lack of Crown-granted revenue, so that the wealth and position of Thomas Walsingham and Marlowe's own share in Thomas's fortune and affection was destroyed. Marlowe's emotional/social/financial relationship with the Walsinghams is paralleled in *The Jew of Malta* by the relationship of Barabas to Abigail, his

*... one sole daughter, whom I hold as dear  
As Agamemnon did his Iphigen.*

**The Jew of Malta - 1.1.136-137**

The comparison is pertinent to Marlowe's relationship with the Walsinghams in that, just as Agamemnon was prepared to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia to appease Artemis, so Marlowe was effectively sacrificed by the Walsinghams to appease the Queen's demand that Whitgift's authority be accepted as a pro-active demonstration of loyalty to the Queen's government.

Again, the example of Agamemnon involves the notion of violence begetting violence, as Agamemnon's sacrifice provoked subsequent revenge by his wife Clytemnestra, who murdered him, and was herself murdered by her son.

Expressing his love for his daughter, Barabas says, '*And all I have is hers*' (1.1.138). This pledge of affection and sharing may recall King Edward's letter to Gaveston in Marlowe's play of *Edward II*, where Edward tells Gaveston:

*My father is deceas'd, come Gaveston,  
And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend.*

**Edward II - 1.1.1-2**

When Marlowe was enjoying the patronage of Thomas Walsingham and the encouragement of the Raleigh circle, this kind of prospect was available to him as Thomas Walsingham's 'dearest friend', following the death of Thomas's brother Edmund in November, 1589. Thomas then inherited the family manor at Scadbury.<sup>18</sup> This welcome prospect was destroyed by the Walsinghams' estrangement from royal favour and the Queen's policy of personal safety, the implementation of which was delegated to Archbishop Whitgift, whose censorship committee suppressed Marlowe's original version of *Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe's defiance of Whitgift's suppressive methods resulted in his loss of Walsingham's patronage as the Walsinghams were forced into demonstrating loyalty to the Queen and her 'policy'. Thus, as the three Jews enter Scene 1, the first Jew counters the previous image of fortune and affection with a generalised disdain of 'policy': '*Tush, tell not me, 'twas done of policy*' (1.1.139), echoing Marlowe's reaction to the apologists of the New Order of Whitgift's 'Iron Age regression'.

When the three Jews inform Barabas of the arrival of 'warlike galleys' from Turkey, his sole concern is for his family and his personal possessions. The Turks may '*Kill all, So they spare me, my daughter, and my wealth*' (1.1.151-152). Again, this serves to lampoon generally the conforming apologists who are similarly limiting their concerns to personal safety and personal finance, and in particular, it may mock the attitude of Francis Walsingham, struggling for the favour of the Queen and seeking to secure the position and wealth of himself and his family.

When Barabas learns that 'all the Jews in Malta' must attend a senate, he again emphasises the division between blinkered personal concern and the collective welfare of his own community: '*Assure yourselves I'll look (aside) unto myself*' (1.1.172). By implication, this individual outlook of a personal security detached from society or the country at large, follows the example of Queen Elizabeth, whose policy of purely personal safety prohibited any argument based on the 'country's good' as distinct from the desires of the country's monarch.

Barabas's last speech in Scene 1 updates the Guise's speech of projecting ideology into action. In Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, the Guise mobilises his 'deep-engend'red thoughts' of patriotic glory (Scene 2.34-47), but in *The Jew of Malta*'s changed climate of public acquiescence and purely personal ambition, Barabas 'summons his senses' to conclude that '*Howe'er the world go, I'll make sure for one,... warily guarding that which I ha' got*' (1.1.185-187). He then adds the Latin precept '*Ego mihi met sum semper proximus*' (1.1.188) - *I am always my own best friend* - which emphasises the relatively friendless isolation of the individual. The implication of a lack of others as 'friends' of any

<sup>18</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Walsingham\\_\(literary\\_patron\)#Early\\_life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Walsingham_(literary_patron)#Early_life)

value mirrors Marlowe's own loss of friendship and support from Walsingham and the Raleigh circle, following his insistent defiance of authoritarian dogma and his 'friends' acquiescence to the Whitgift regime.

Thus, the opening Prologue and first Scene of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* sketches out an environment of dogmatic suppression by Malta's Christian rulers, who may be associated with Queen Elizabeth's ratification of Archbishop Whitgift's dogmatic suppression of the 1590s. The use of this dogmatic suppression, whether social, cultural and ultimately physical, invokes the reciprocal response of a retaliatory physical suppression, but until such a physical retaliation becomes a practical possibility, the constrained individual (such as Barabas in the play, or his equivalent 1590s English commercial entrepreneurs, such as the Walsinghams and their associates) must choose to build an active opposition or maintain any personal interests within an acquiescence to the suppressive authority.

Thomas Walsingham chose the short-term expedient of acquiescence to regain family wealth and position, but his family subsequently supported Parliament - "Sir Thomas Walsingham (MP between 1614 and 1640) supported the Parliamentarian side in the English Civil War".<sup>19</sup> This pattern of behaviour was common as the new middle classes searched for a social and economic structure appropriate to a changed world, where the rapid economic changes of the period were upsetting old social relationships, and creating new classes of persons who no longer fitted into the old ordered 'hierarchical system' of national monarchy and local parish.<sup>20</sup>

© Garnet Marriot 2011  
Sheffield

---

<sup>19</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Walsingham\\_\(MP\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Walsingham_(MP))

<sup>20</sup> L. Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) - p.87. Stone decides (p.78) that "Queen Elizabeth's policy of masterly inactivity" prevented a civil war following her death, "but made civil war more rather than less likely in the future".

## Extended Notes

### Extended Note 1

Around 1599, William Shakespeare was providing useful support for the Essex cause in his historical dramas, such as *Henry IV*, *Henry V* and *Richard II*, and with his play of *Julius Caesar*, he extrapolates Marlowe's 'What right had Caesar to the empery?' into a dramatic exposition. The distinction between the good of the country and monarchical desire that degenerates into arbitrary absolutism is the basis of the conspirators decision to kill Caesar, and although the conspirators die at the end of the play, the distinction of the 'common good' is commended again in Mark Antony's tribute to Brutus, which serves also as Shakespeare's tribute to Kit Marlowe:

*He only in a general honest thought  
And common good to all made one of them.  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mixed in him that nature might stand up  
And say to all the world 'This was a man'*

**Julius Caesar - 5.5.70-74**

Shakespeare's inference is that those of the Raleigh circle who argued against absolutism did so to further their own claims for power, but Marlowe had evinced a genuine concern for the 'good of all'.

In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare confirms the ideological connection by including a cameo caricature of Marlowe as Cinna the Poet, who is taken to be Cinna the Conspirator by the plebeians in Act 3 Scene 3. Cinna's response to their questioning is interpreted to denote that 'all who marry are fools', recalling Marlowe's opposition to 'ceremonial' marriages (such as those arranged by the Queen's advisors) in *Doctor Faustus*.<sup>21</sup>

Like Cinna the Poet, Marlowe the poet and dramatist (an alleged 'sinner') was categorised as a treasonous conspirator and condemned accordingly. The plebeians' arbitrary verdict mirrors Marlowe's treatment: 'Tear him for his bad verses', after which, he is physically attacked.

In Act 4, Scene 1, Shakespeare provides Mark Antony with an allusion to Marlowe's encouragement, and subsequent abandonment, by the Raleigh 'circle of friends'. Marlowe's close friendship with Thomas Walsingham, and Walsingham's acquiescence in Marlowe's condemnation, is evoked when Octavius tells Lepidus, 'Your brother too must die. Consent you Lepidus?' Lepidus gives his consent but is then re-cast as Marlowe, as Mark Antony re-assesses Lepidus to be no more than:

---

<sup>21</sup> See Marriot, op.cit., *Loyalty and Freedom* - p.8.

*a slight, unmeritable man,  
Meet to be sent on errands*

**Julius Caesar - 4.1.11-12**

This convenient re-assessment may express Shakespeare's view of Thomas Walsingham, whilst mirroring the implicit re-assessment of Marlowe by the Raleigh circle from 'Cultural Mercurial Messenger' to 'expendable propagandist/stool pigeon'. The re-assessment also reflects a Court reassessment from Messenger of the Court performing 'valuable service' to 'inconsequential errand boy'.

Antony explains:

*Though we lay these honours on this man,  
To ease ourselves of divers sland'rous loads,  
He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,  
Then take we down his load, and turn him off,  
Like to the empty ass, to shake his ears  
And graze in commons.*

**Julius Caesar - 4.1.19-24**

This exploitative technique reflects the way in which Marlowe was sponsored as a public voice of New Learning and associated political and social evolution and then expelled from Courtly society, to be subsequently scapegoated as a 'treasonous atheist conspirator.'

**Extended Note 2**

A similar argument is used in the play of 'Selimus', which Marlowe probably wrote under the sponsorship of the Raleigh circle. In this play, religion is projected as a method of social control, but is historically justified as a means of imposing social order on social chaos. Selimus decides that religious beliefs are mere fictions :

*Only bug-bears to keep the world in fear,  
And make men quietly a yoke to bear.  
So that religion, of itself a bauble,  
Was only found to make us peaceable.  
Hence in especial comes the foolish names  
Of father, mother, brother, and such like.  
For who so well his cogitation frames,  
Shall find they serve but only for to strike  
Into our minds a certain kind of love.  
For these names too are but a policy,  
To keep the quiet of society.  
Indeed, I must confess they are not bad,  
Because they keep the baser sort in fear;  
but we, whose mind in heavenly thoughts is clad,  
Whose body doth a glorious spirit bear,*

*That hath no bounds, but flieth everywhere;  
Why should we seek to make that soul a slave,  
To which Dame Nature so large freedom gave.*

***The Tragical Reign of Selimus*<sup>22</sup>**

The text of *Selimus* exhibits a similar technique of revision and addition to that of the mangled text of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The original 'New Learning' text has been revised with additions, reflecting the environment of social and cultural suppression, including a form of post-suppression comedy.

**Extended Note 3**

By 1588, Walter Raleigh had become a rival to the Earl of Essex as 'chivalric courtier' for the Queen's affections. In his book *The Queen & the Poet*, Walter Oakeshott<sup>23</sup> notes that the Queen regarded Raleigh as a valuable military leader and advisor until 1588, when it became clear that Spain was unable to land an invasion force in England. This fact facilitated the movement of savage repression overseen by Archbishop Whitgift on the Queen's behalf. The Queen's religious authority was considered the basis of her popular support, so that, in addition to the escalating suppression of Catholics, action was taken against those who professed no particular religion at all, these being categorised as 'atheists.' Just as the Queen had taken action to confine the activities of Francis Walsingham, she placed increasing restrictions on Walter Raleigh, as he embraced 'New Learning,' and sought a more powerful position in the Courtly hierarchy. The 1594 investigation into Raleigh's 'atheism' was sanctioned under an edict of 1591.

As a relatively powerless adherent of 'New Learning', and favoured associate of Raleigh and the Walsinghams, Christopher Marlowe was a convenient scapegoat, whose prosecution would serve as an example to his sponsors of the Queen's requirement of a pro-active commitment to her personal safety and her personal policies for the country's government.

**Extended Note 4**

The Levant Company (Turkey Traders) was 'a highly ramified network of interlocking families', dominated by Francis Walsingham, and this network 'drove a trade worth more than £100,000 a year'.<sup>24</sup> In 1588, the Charter of the Turkey Company was not renewed and Francis Walsingham appears to have become involved in a particular instance of the larger struggle between the Crown and the commercial interests that required the Civil War to effect an appropriate political resolution. In his *Early History of the Levant Company*, M Epstein<sup>25</sup> explains that '*the merchants wanted to combine the Turkey company and the Venice trading company, emphasising their political usefulness in making their case to William Cecil*'. Francis Walsingham

<sup>22</sup> Robert Greene, *The Tragical Reign of Selimus*, (General Books, 2009) - p15-16.

<sup>23</sup> W. Oakeshott, *The Queen & the Poet* (Faber, 1960).

<sup>24</sup> Richard Wilson, *Another Country*, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> M. Epstein, *Early History of the Levant Company* (Routledge, 1908)



financed and supported the independent commercial expansion of the Turkey Company, affirming that, '*If any man take exception against our new trade with Turks and misbelievers, he shall show himself a man of small experience in old and new histories*'.<sup>26</sup> This is exactly the kind of argument depicted as farcically impotent in Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, where, for instance, the purely intellectual notions of Ramus are countered by simply stabbing him to death.

---

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.thevalve.org/go/valve/article/the\\_terrorist\\_of\\_malta\\_part\\_i/](http://www.thevalve.org/go/valve/article/the_terrorist_of_malta_part_i/)