

# Who Was Machiavelli to Marlowe: Barabas and Ferneze's Destiny

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**Abstract** Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* starts with a preface put into Machiavelli's mouth. This introduction has sparked a lot of controversy. According to scholars, Machiavelli was a genius, and Marlowe believed that Machiavelli knew of him. There is debate whether the preface is related to the rest of the play, or whether it is a sensational work that may have been added after the play was written. Marlowe seems to have achieved his goal of exploring Machiavellian ideas through Barabas and Ferneze and demonstrating some Machiavellian guidelines. This research attempts to explore various issues related to Machiavelli as well as Machiavellianism. A large number of discourses in the history of Western thought has been associated with Machiavelli as he is reckoned a philosopher of the first rank based on his ideas and actions which had a lasting impact on his succeeding philosophers and political thinkers over time. It also examined the character of Barabas as his resistance is important to shed light on the struggle he had to make under Catholicism. On another, the massacre in Paris is compared because it contains a theme similar to Geese. Marlowe's play touches on the subject of Machiavellianism and explains some of the religious and political influences of his time.

**Keywords** Barabas; Ferneze; Catholicism; Machiavelli; political influences

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## Introduction

In the history of nations, through the present recurrence of a strong age, a lot of attention has been given to Niccol Machiavelli, whose shadow still haunts the minds of people. Recently, a writer in the Springfield Republican pointed to the increasing burden of Machiavellianism in German books which has been disturbed for many years (Warshaw 28). The contemporary representative of Machiavelli's political theory has been able to popularize his concepts and ideas if not his name. Like Nietzsche has philosophized Machiavelli. In the opinion of a few, Germany is putting him into practice nowadays. Over time, his name became renowned and was frequently taken especially in England. His ideas and thoughts were however misunderstood and his methods were not comprehended (Warshaw 28).

The playwrights of the Elizabethan era cultivated diligently their pseudo acquaintance with him and Eduard Meyer in his Elizabethan drama and Machiavelli has shown impressively the vogue enjoyed by Machiavelli among characteristic writers for the stage such as Peele, Ben Jonson, Kyd, Greene, Dekker, Heywood, Middleton, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare and the lesser lights of the theatre (Warshaw 28). Since a large part of this play is related to different aspects of Machiavelli's thoughts as expressed in his various books, the current paper shall examine these concerning the play to identify similarities or differences in how Marlowe introduces situations based on Machiavelli's writings. *The Prince*, one of Machiavelli's most important works, will be studied concerning the implementation of villainy by both leading characters in the play.

Barabas is Malta's wealthiest Jew, Abigail's father, and Malta's Jewish protagonist. He was very greedy and corrupt and gained wealth by Machiavellian means. That is, he is very deceptive and malicious. Barabas often mentions his identity which is Jewish and the hatred and prejudice he faces in Malta, but this is where Barabas' connection to his faith and beliefs closes. He continuously fabricates truth, does frauds, and, misbehaves with the people of his life, even when other Jewish citizens who consider him as their fellow, ask Barabas for his help when Ferneze uses them to pay Turkish compliments. Barabas every time refuses them or neglects them. Barabas may resemble Ferneze in his policy of adopting Machiavellianism in terms of villainy, but not in terms of handling political matters; Ribner offers this example: "[T]he one political action [Barabas] does undertake during his brief rule as Governor of Malta is in direct contradiction to some of Machiavelli's most often stated maxims (Ribner 352). This occurs when "Barabas enters into a conspiracy with Ferneze, his bitter enemy, to overthrow Calymath, the

Turkish conqueror of Malta. Barabas here disregards at least two of Machiavelli's precepts, for "not only does Machiavelli warn against alliance with Princes who have no power of their own, but one of his most constant precepts is that a former enemy, or one who has been injured in any way, must never again be trusted (Ribner 353)."

Ribner makes it clear that "in trusting Ferneze, Barabas, in very un-Machiavellian fashion, invites his disaster." It is interesting for Marlowe to demonstrate that Barabas' failure to follow some Machiavellian scheming is the reason for his fall. It may be suggested that Marlowe uses his protagonists to show that villains will fall if they fail to show proper villainy; in other words, a suitably Machiavellian approach. It is possible to view Marlowe's representation of Machiavellianism as divided into different categories. He identifies Machiavelli with both Ferneze and Barabas, but such a representation is ambivalent; for instance, as Menpes argues, "Barabas is not as good at revenge as he is at making a profit" (Broude 67), whereas Ferneze is more gifted than Barabas in matters of state.

### **The Concept of Niccolo Machiavelli**

Niccolo Machiavelli was born in 1469 in Florence. Machiavelli came from a wealthy background, his father was an authoritative lawyer. Machiavelli received his higher education and worked as a secretary at his first job. This is where he started writing government documents. However, shortly after his appointment, Florence exploded politically, expelling the Medici who ruled it for 60 years, suffering decades of political instability, and then Macavelli's career changes.

Machiavelli wrote his most famous work, *The Prince* (1513), about how to get and keep power and what makes individuals effective leaders. He proposed that the overwhelming responsibility of a good prince is to defend the state from external and internal threats to stable governance. This means he must know how to fight, but more importantly, he must know about the reputation and the management of those around him. People should neither think he is soft and easy to disobey nor should they find him so cruel that he disgusts his society. He should seem unapproachably strict but reasonable. When he turned to the question of whether it was better for a prince to be loved or feared, Machiavelli wrote that while it would theoretically be wonderful for a leader to be both loved and obeyed, he should always err on the side of inspiring terror, for this is what ultimately keeps people in check.

Niccolo Machiavelli developed and presented his concepts in *The Prince* that exerted a deep impact on the Elizabethan dramatists. Before they could incorporate these concepts in the Elizabethan drama they were deviated and disparaged by

Gabriel Harvey, Father Parsons, Innocent Gentillet, and a few others. As a result of this, Machiavelli's original ideas were hardly recognizable in the Elizabethan interpretations at that time. The main ideas of Machiavelli are; the ruled majority of individuals are weak, passive inconsistent, mutable, simple, and ungrateful therefore they can be subjected and controlled easily by *The Prince* (Machiavelli 2004). Whereas "*The Prince* is ambitious, determined, noble, superior to rule, and unconquerable; war is dominant over every other thing," also, religion is "just a prop of the state which is used to keep the people under control and the use of force and fraud will help to conquer successfully" (Janssen 5).

In short, Machiavelli believed that a successful government has political power in which *The Prince* makes use of love and fear to pressure the subjects to obey his orders. The corrupt ideas upon which Elizabethan drama's hero and villain are based show the vilification of Machiavelli's ideas "Machiavelli is too complex to be reduced to a simple formula, on the other, he lends himself to create the villain characters needed by the Elizabethan theatre and society" (Ceramella 6). His political cynicism is practically applied to personal and political affairs virtue opposes moral virtue, selfish motives substitute the goal of the common good through the unification of the Italian state. It results in a black and corrupted fiend, the one who is superior to everyone, cruel, violent, deceiving, and incredibly ambitious. Christopher Marlowe used these ideas to develop the main character Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*. Barabas demonstrates the selfishness, villainy, ambition, and dishonesty of a stereotyped Machiavelli. The careers of both hero and villain follow Machiavelli's pattern of life. Barabas gains great power and success by force and fraud and is fallen into the trap of destruction by fate which he believed that he controlled. "But learn that fortune cannot be controlled by any human not even a conquering hero or superman" (Janssen 6).

Barabas refusal to pay Malta the tax leads to him losing his properties as a punishment for refusing to take Ferneze orders. When Bosco arrives, Ferneze at first does not allow him to sell Turkish slaves because of the presence of the Calymath. Bosco promises military aid from Spain and Ferneze allows the sale. Ferneze then defies the Calymath, refusing to give the collected tribute money. When Bellamira and Pilia-Borza tell him of Barabas' connection to his son's death, Ferneze has Barabas arrested. When Barabas dies, Ferneze has the body thrown over the city walls rather than properly buried. Barabas helps Calymath take over Malta but then attempts to double-cross him with Ferneze. However, instead of helping to kill Calymath, Ferneze springs the trap early, killing Barabas. He then informs Calymath that he is a prisoner until the Turkish emperor promises Malta freedom.

### Ferneze vs Barabas

The differences between Barabas and Ferneze in their representation of Machiavellian qualities may have certain historical roots. The concept of the “two sides of Machiavelli” runs parallel to Marlowe’s discussion of the “two religions.” Whether it is Catholicism versus Protestantism or Catholicism versus Judaism, Marlowe’s interest in developing his drama by investigating two sides is clear. In this play, whether on purpose or not, he divides Machiavellian features into two groups, one belonging to Ferneze and the other to Barabas. “Marlowe makes such accounts of Machiavelli similar to how Machiavelli himself was viewed during his life and after his death in that people and the way they reacted to him were also divided into two sides. For example, those who read Machiavelli in the Renaissance era were divided into those who approved of him and those who did not” (Al-Mutawa 157). Was Marlowe aware of such trends when he wrote his play and divided Machiavellian features between Barabas and Ferneze? This is a possibility, although the problem goes beyond that as there is, in the first place, the question of where Marlowe would find sources of information on Machiavelli. It is, indeed, interesting to see Marlowe depict two sides of Machiavelli in these two characters because it gives more scope to how Marlowe received readings of Machiavelli. One of the most important strands of Machiavelli’s political thought can be seen in the way in which a ruler should keep the faith. This is something that can easily be observed in Marlowe’s drama:

How laudable it is for a Prince to keep the faith, and to live with integrity and not with guile, everyone perceives: nonetheless, in our times one sees by experience that *The Princes* who have done great things are the ones who have taken little account of faith, and who have known to turn men’s brains with guile: and in the end have surpassed those who grounded them. (*The Prince*, XVIII, 65)

Machiavelli encourages his prince to abandon honesty in his treatment of others because success comes only to those who care little about keeping their word. This can be seen in the way in which Barabas relies on Ferneze’s word that he will help him to rid Malta of the Turks. These teachings reflect the action Ferneze takes when he considers faith a worthless thing in his treatment of Barabas. Ferneze manages to adapt his pretense according to the situation he is in. In act five, scene two, pp. 84–89, Ferneze is in the weak position of being Barabas’ prisoner, so he

acts accordingly, following Machiavellian policy that “one needs to be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to dismay the wolves” (Calhoon 211). In that situation, Ferneze recognizes that he must act as a weak person because he is a prisoner, whereas Barabas does not exploit the power he is given and thus fails to implement Machiavellian policy. Barabas does not even resist, as he did earlier in the play. Machiavelli is content that any prince should be virtuous or keep the faith; the problem is that others will not, so Machiavelli urges princes to overcome their enemies by adopting a villainous attitude rather than persisting in their honesty and losing everything. If this has any impact on Barabas, it is seen in his transformation into someone who seeks revenge for what Malta has inflicted on him. With the exception that his past was full of violence, Barabas succeeds in revenging himself on Ferneze by becoming as cruel as him, killing his son and retrieving money from his house; but he then loses his authority after gaining power.

### **Guise in the Massacre at Paris**

Barabas becomes a merciless villain because of Ferneze orders. He considers Ferneze a defiant who must be stopped. Barabas' resemblance to Guise is significant if we exclude the political experience of Guise, which Barabas lacks. “It is possible to say that the characters in *The Massacre at Paris* and *The Jew of Malta* manifest similarities since political awareness is an obvious trait of some of the characters in both plays” (Al-Mutawa 159). The contempt that Ferneze shows for Barabas, which also leads him to exploit the Jews' wealth and property, is similar to the hatred that the Catholics have of the Protestants in *The Massacre at Paris*. For instance, Ferneze and one of his knights tell Barabas:

(...) If your first curse falls heavy on thy head,  
And make thee poor and scorned of all the world,  
'Tis not our fault, buy thy inherent sin  
(JM, I, ii, pp. 108–110)

and:

For through our sufferance of your hateful lives,  
Who stand accursed in the sight of heaven,  
These taxes and afflictions are befall'n.  
(JM, I, ii, pp. 64–66)

Ferneze's policy in targeting the Jews springs from two major factors: one is their religion, which he hates, as “Marlowe clearly illustrates; the other is their wealth,

which tempts him to exploit them and take their money” (Al-Mutawa 159). Ferneze here and Guise in *The Massacre at Paris* seem to share the goal of eradicating an opposing group – the Jews and the Protestants respectively. “They both direct their efforts to destroy the enemy, but this destruction takes different forms” (Feiner 92). Ferneze aims to take the Jews’ money because it is their dearest possession, while Guise conducts a massacre because it is the only way to eliminate the Protestants. Both actions are taken because of hatred although political expediency is also a reason for such action. Hatred seems to come first since both characters clearly express it in both plays. Ferneze is aware that Barabas and his coreligionists would not agree to become Christians, so he offers them the chance to convert to Christianity as an alternative to paying his unjust tax (JM I, ii, pp. 73–74) and thus manages to take their money out of hatred. On the other hand, Guise deals with Protestants by raging against them when they make heretical pronouncements.

The offer of conversion is based on Ferneze's belief that his religion is better than other religions, whereas Guise's rage arises because he witnesses an offense against Catholicism. Both Ferneze and Guise attempt to elevate their religion in different forms. In this example, Guise expresses irony towards what Lorraine, a Protestant preacher, does because Guise hates Loreine, just as Ferneze hates Barabas:

Guise: (...) Lorraine! (...) are you a preacher of these heresies?

Lorraine: I am a preacher of the word of God;

And thou a traitor to thy soul and him.

Guise: ‘Dearly beloved brother’—thus ‘tis written.

[stabs Loreine, who dies]

(MP, VII, pp. 2–5)

Guise ironically calls Loreine “brother,” which carries the wholly opposite meaning in an expression of extreme loathing. “Guise’s action represents the rejection by Catholics of Protestants because, for Guise, Loreine is not the preacher of the word of God as he claims” (Al-Mutawa 160). Because the Protestant preacher calls Guise a traitor to his soul, Guise is enraged and stabs Loreine in an expression of his loathing of Protestants. “As mentioned before, the policy adopted by Guise is also followed by Ferneze who makes sure that all matters are kept under control. Ferneze hates Barabas in the same way that Guise hates Loreine because both hate for religious reasons” (Al-Mutawa 160). Ferneze knows how to turn his hatred for the Jews to his political advantage in his administration of the country, whereas Barabas

is unable to do so when given the opportunity of wielding political power, with the help of the Turks, later in the play. Beecher argues that Marlowe may wish that “a reader might extend his sympathies to a character the victim of Christian prejudices, more sinned against than sinning” (Don Beecher 47). This point is interesting since it calls into question the feeling of sympathy for Barabas. In this situation, Barabas is truly being unjustly treated and if Marlowe tries to create any kind of sympathy for Barabas, it might be a step towards making the Catholics seem abhorrent in their treatment of others.

### **Barabas' Politics**

Barabas fails to keep his word when swearing to destroy Malta, although Ferneze attempts to murder him. Shortly before Calymath finds Barabas, the Jew has woken from unconsciousness caused by drinking a potion which has made the Catholics think that he is dead. Barabas then expresses his desire for revenge on them:

[Rising] What, all alone! Well fare, sleepy drink!  
 I'll be reveng'd on this accursed town;  
 For by my means Calymath shall enter in:  
 I'll help to slay their children and their wives,  
 To fire churches, pull their houses down,  
 Take my goods too, and seize upon my lands,  
 I hope to see the governor a slave  
 And, rowing in a gallery, whipt to death.  
 (JM, V, i, pp. 61–68)

Barabas' “sleepy drink” may also represent the disguise and pretence which occur throughout the play since he drinks it to fake his death. The oath of revenge which Barabas makes in these lines is not realised. When Barabas talks about what he intends to do, the audience calls to mind Barabas' previous actions, when he killed innocent people. Here he threatens to burn churches and other buildings, so this warning is perceived as serious. In the end, however, he does not put these threats into practice. Marlowe demonstrates that Barabas is somewhat villainous but not so much as to implement Machiavellianism in the political sense. This is because Ferneze has outwitted him by predicting the situation if Barabas stays in control, which has made Barabas think instantly of reconsidering his position as the new governor.

When Barabas becomes governor, he is quickly tested in his political role.

Marlowe then gives him one of the most important speeches in the play, a soliloquy in which he expresses his concerns about governorship, fearing that Malta will hate him. This indicates Barabas' unjustifiable ignorance of the fact that being governor means power; he sees power only in money, not in political office. "He also forgets that he was hated long before coming to power" (Al-Mutawa 162). Comparing the lines quoted above, where he swears to take revenge and destroy Malta, with the following passage from his later soliloquy reveals the great shift in the way he thinks and the way he analyses his position after obtaining political power:

Thus hast thou gotten, by the policy,  
 No simple place, no simple authority:  
 I now am governor of Malta; true –  
 But Malta hates me, and, in hating me,  
 My life's in danger; and what boots it thee.  
 (JM, V, ii, pp. 27–31)

Barabas is simply unable to act as a politician and it is there where the shift is seen. When Barabas is tested and given a political role, he is seen to be incompetent at wielding power. Despite all this, it is clear that Marlowe presents to his audience a stereotyped picture of the Jew. Barabas grieves for himself: "Poor Barabas, to be the governor/ when as thy life shall be at their command?" After that, he searches for quick solutions, saying: "No, Barabas, this must be looked into/ and, since by wrong thou gott'st authority/ Maintain it bravely by firm policy at least, unprofitably lose it not" (JM V, ii, 34–37). Once again, Barabas returns to the question of money: "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, ii, 27–40).

Barabas is confused when thinking about his next step. His language implies hesitancy and it is apparent that all his concerns are still present, although he is in power. He is preoccupied with those who will hate him because he angered them, forgetting that he is above everyone, in supreme authority. Barabas thinks more about money than he thinks about being in authority. Power "for him is money, not the performance of political missions" (Al-Mutawa 163). He fears angering the people of Malta because they might strip him of his money, just as Ferneze once did. Marlowe, through Barabas, defines power as requiring ambition. In that sense, those who manage to obtain and make use of power are people like Guise and Ferneze. The importance of power is strongly related to ambition and broad thinking. Barabas' narrow interest in money makes him limited in thinking about

how to exploit power, whereas Ferneze's ability to represent power in the play is manifested. As soon as he has taken matters in hand following Barabas' death, Ferneze orders that Calymath shall "live in Malta prisoner" (JM V, iv, 118), which is an indication of how Marlowe is interested in representing power in the play.

The confusion Barabas shows when he reveals some degree of political inexperience, or rather lack of political sense, may predict his destiny in that it leads to his failure to survive the events of the play. Marlowe's representation of power has some components which are seen in Machiavelli's warnings:

*The Prince* has enemies among all those whom he has injured in seizing that principality, and he is not able to keep those friends who put him there because of his not being able to satisfy them in the way they expected, and he cannot take strong measures against them, feeling bound to them. For, although one may be very strong in armed forces, yet in entering a province one always need the goodwill of the natives (Machiavelli *The Prince*, III, 7)

If Barabas is not aware of Machiavellian politics, he is also ignorant of how to rule the state properly. This also tells how Marlowe brings Machiavellian ideas into the play by introducing Barabas, the ignorant, against Ferneze, the expert. Marlowe's purpose behind "such representation of Machiavellian thought seems to be that he is interested in representing the power of Machiavellian tactics which Barabas fails to implement" (Al-Mutawa 164). Barabas' reliance on Ferneze to help him find a resolution to his difficulties is a step which confirms his failure to recognize what sort of person Ferneze is, and how Machiavellian Ferneze is in his approach to politics and the inhabitants of Malta. Barabas becomes figuratively blind when he deals with Ferneze. "He seeks his help because Ferneze is more aware than he is of the situation in Malta, but Barabas does not recognize that his actions will destroy him" (Al-Mutawa 164). Machiavelli, as we have seen, advises rulers that they need the goodwill of the indigenous people, but Barabas' choice of Ferneze is wrong and he seeks the help of the one person who most hates him. "Barabas' misuse of power and his inability to exploit it makes him fall" rapidly (Al-Mutawa 164). It would have been better for Barabas if he had never undertaken the role of ruler, because he was a more successful villain before he rose to power. For example, although he was not a ruler, he was able to give warnings to Ferneze such as:

(...) But theft is worse: tush! Take not from me, then,  
For that is theft, and, if you rob me thus,

I must be forc'd to steal, and compass more.  
(JM I, ii, 126–128)

Barabas seems to be saying that Ferneze's actions will lead him to steal and commit other illegal acts. He is warning Ferneze and when Ferneze does not take Barabas' words seriously, Barabas can implement villainy, in contrast to the situation when he is seeking help and advice as ruler. There is another aspect of Barabas' downfall related to his failure to identify that Ferneze is not a good friend. Let us consider how Machiavelli depicts a strong prince who ensures that he cannot be beaten by exercising extreme caution in his choice of the people surrounding him. Machiavelli recommends that a careful prince:

Must have a third mode, choosing wise men in his state, and only to those must he give license to speak the truth to him, and of those things alone that he asks about and of nothing else; but he must ask them about everything and hear their opinions; therefore, to deliberate alone, in his way. (Prince XXIII, 87)

Machiavelli intends the choice of the individuals surrounding the ruler to eliminate any undesirable follower who might be a threat to him. "A prince ought also to show himself a patron of ability, and to honour the proficient in every art. At the same time, he should encourage his citizens to practise their callings peaceably, both in commerce and agriculture, and in every other following, so that the one should not be deterred from improving his possessions for fear lest they be taken away from him or another from opening up trade for fear of taxes; but the prince ought to offer rewards to whoever wishes to do these things and designs in any way to honour his city or state" (Machiavelli 72). In the context of the play, Barabas' ignorance of how to choose his intimates leads him to fail to bring in people who can support him. It appears that the detailed description of rulers and those surrounding them are carefully chosen by Machiavelli, who is concerned with presenting a strong prince with independent thinking. Ferneze appears in act one, scene two with the officer who can be considered his right-hand man. Later, the first knight of Malta wisely asks Del Bosco, the Spanish vice-admiral, to help his country against the Turks:

Del Bosco, as thou lov'st and honour'st us,  
Persuade our governor against the Turks.  
This truce we have is but hope of gold,  
And with that sum he craves might we wage war.

(JM II, ii, 24–27)

This speech is uttered after Ferneze has expressed his inability to do anything because of the tributary league with the Turks; thus, the knight comments sensibly on his lord's speech, in that he asks for advice and states that all he does is for the good of Malta and Ferneze, whereas Barabas chooses the wrong people when he depends on Ferneze to give him advice while he is the governor. An example given by Machiavelli of the cities of Germany shows how they "are most free, have little countryside and obey the emperor when they want to" (Machiavelli, p. 40). This reflects how *The Prince* seeks his interest according to how he views matters, deciding when to follow an emperor and when not to. Machiavelli aims to create a strong ruler with no regard for any other matters such as religion. Machiavelli's prince seeks domination, not allowing any kind of rebellion against him; he will always seek to stabilize the political situation, even if he is required to declare war to avoid being a victim. Machiavelli says that "it will always be more useful to you to come out openly and make a good war; because in the first case, if you do not come out, you will always be the prey of whoever wins" (Machiavelli, p. 82). In the play, Ferneze is ready to wage war against Barabas and the Turks through his secret alliance with the Spanish fleet; thus he prepares himself to overcome the outside forces which stand in his way. The relevance of Machiavelli's example to those in Marlowe's play is notable because the representation of power is seen in *The Prince* whom Machiavelli is trying to construct. On the other hand, Marlowe's text offers great interest in its representation of power and in how his two main characters' deal with that feature. Marlowe makes sure that the Spanish fleet is the threat and danger that plays a major role in the stability of that area to possibly remind his reader of the role of Catholic Spain and what it represents.

Breaking an oath is a subject that Marlowe uses in his drama to show how people can free themselves from commitment and become powerful through their ability to defeat their enemies; it could be taken as a reference to Machiavelli and his teachings. This is perhaps one of the most important perspectives that Marlowe offers in both *The Massacre at Paris* and *The Jew of Malta*, where he depicts Catholics as people who cannot be trusted to keep a promise. This point is made in *The Massacre at Paris* about the marriage, when the Catholics break their word by adopting the marriage scheme, whereas in *The Jew of Malta*, the breach of an oath occurs after Ferneze has been assured by Del Bosco of his protection against the Turks on condition that he cooperates with Del Bosco. Ferneze is satisfied with this pact with his brother in religion, declaring war "against these barbarous

misbelieving Turks," and accepting that "honour is bought with blood and not with gold" (JM II, ii, 56). The play's "major premise is the notorious Catholic doctrine that promises made to heretics need not be kept" (Kocher, p. 123). Marlowe exploits this point to demonstrate how Catholics, represented by Ferneze, dominate Barabas, despite his villainy. The ideas Marlowe uses in his play could be said to highlight some aspects of Machiavelli's tactics which Marlowe attempts to symbolize.

### **Marlowe and His Play**

The setting in Malta seems to mirror Marlowe society and the conflict between Protestant and Catholics. Machiavellianism contributed in aiding Marlowe to explore the theme. Malta is indeed a suitable setting for Marlowe to discuss issues related to Machiavellianism because circumstances such as the presence of more than one religion made conflicts more likely to take place. "It may be that England was not far from Marlowe's thinking when he wrote the play because of the similarity of the conditions in the two countries" (Al-Mutawa 168). This is an interesting point which seems central to the play as a whole. One particular idea that can be taken as a reflection of the contemporary historical perception of England is Marlowe's apparent attempt to use the political events of the play to shed light on what happened in England in 1588. The defeat of the Spanish Armada at the hands of the English about two years before the play was written may also have been one of Marlowe's interests in depicting such historical implications. A further similarity between Malta and England is that both are surrounded by sea, giving Marlowe the chance to depict treacheries and conflicts between different forces using the sea as a source of danger; for example, when Del Bosco arrives by ship to support the Catholics. In many ways, Malta was thus not very different from England, allowing Marlowe to use it to symbolise his own country.

In the play, the policy which Ferneze adopts is considered successful. There is a marked contrast between Ferneze and Barabas, as already mentioned. Ferneze says that his government takes Barabas' money "to save the ruin of a multitude" and that "better one want for a common good than many perish for a private man" (JM I, ii, 97–100). This sounds intelligent, because it achieves his purpose, which is to take the Jews' money, whereas Barabas' simple comment on the burden of authority he bears when becoming governor, in addition to the fear that people will hate him, suggests that he thinks differently and unwisely. He would prefer to have wealth for himself, even though being governor might bring more wealth. He sees the threat from the people as a reason not to be happy with being governor, perhaps because Ferneze has shown him how hated and unwelcomed he is in Malta. He decides to be

more careful about the situation to recover his money, simply because he is given a political role that he is not able to handle:

But Barabas will be more circumspect.  
 Begin betimes, occasion's bald behind:  
 Slip not thine opportunity, for fear too late  
 Thou seek'st for much, but canst not compass it  
 (JM V, ii, 43–46)

Marlowe reveals Barabas as a relative simpleton with politics. The final betrayal of Barabas by Ferneze may reflect Marlowe's point that Ferneze makes no mistakes. Barabas falls short of the attributes of a successful politician. In addition to what has been said before about his failure in his conversation with Ferneze. Ferneze gives Barabas an answer full of perspicacity with politics. For example, he answers Barabas thus:

(...) Since things are thy power  
 I see no reason but of Malta wreck,  
 Nor hope of thee but extreme cruelty:  
 Nor fear I death, nor will I flatter thee.  
 (JM V, ii, 57–60)

Ferneze repeats words that denote Malta's destruction, such as "wreck" and "extreme cruelty." This makes Barabas fear the loss of his commercial prosperity in exchange for exercising power in Malta and Ferneze is aware of this. When Barabas asks for Ferneze's opinion, it is clever of Ferneze to keep pace with him. First, he alludes to the wreckage of Malta under Barabas. This political cleverness and his balanced, coherent decisions make Ferneze a survivor of the political conflict in Malta. Because he has been cruel to Barabas in the past, he now tells him that he assumes that he will suffer the same cruelty that he once practised against Barabas. Having gained power, Barabas now feels that there is no opponent for him and thus decides to offer peace to Ferneze. Ferneze is successful in making Barabas shift his position from revenge to mutual assistance because he knows that the Jew only wants money.

Barabas' weakness is seen in his dealings with Ferneze. When Ferneze suggests that he will bring destruction to the whole of Malta, Barabas becomes afraid, since the destruction of Malta means that he will lose his opportunity to trade

and make profits; thus he feels that it would be better to relinquish the political role to Ferneze so that he can return to his business, whereas Ferneze will secure Malta politically. Thus, Barabas sees the prosperity of Malta as dependent upon Ferneze's political leadership, preferring to limit himself to trade. Ferneze knows that Barabas' behaviour is that of a person who does not flatter, having dealt with him before, so he feigns the same attitude with him to show that neither he nor Barabas is a flatterer. Ferneze attempts to make Barabas trust him and his words while being his enemy. Knowing that Barabas is aware of the Christians' hypocrisy, he, therefore, strives to convince him otherwise and gain his trust.

Marlowe presents Ferneze as successful even when he does not hold power and as one whose ability to take advantage of every minor opportunity helps him to succeed in his pursuit of power. Ferneze simply controls and enslaves Barabas either way, while for Barabas, as Menpes argues, the case is different. Menpes describes how Marlowe presents an image of a ruler who cannot govern politically: "It is at this moment that Barabas' bondage is revealed most clearly. Even though the Jew is now the pre-eminent political power of his dramatic world, he does not recognize his new status" (Menpes 82). Menpes' argument can be seen in Barabas' desire to relinquish his political role to Ferneze in exchange for being allowed to live and make money. Barabas does not recognize his position as living in bondage, even when he is in authority: "Where Ferneze, after some obvious disappointment, refers to Barabas as 'my lord', Barabas still refers to Ferneze as governor" (Menpes 82). Ferneze can adapt to the change in political power, whereas Barabas can adapt himself to anything except in the field of political power. Another deceit is practised by Ferneze when he pretends that he is powerless before Barabas. When Ferneze mentions that power is in Barabas' hands (JM V, ii, 57), for instance, this encourages Barabas to see his position as that of a strong ruler, so he decides to make some kind of reconciliation with Ferneze, suggesting a truce and co-operation to defeat the Turks; Ferneze's statement gives Barabas the comfort of believing that his opponent can be his friend, but Ferneze misleads Barabas, who does not realize that he is leading him to his downfall, despite his original desire to seek revenge. Marlowe makes this flattery an indication of Machiavellian policy.

Ferneze flatters Barabas by hiding behind friendship to gain authority in Malta through Barabas. Machiavelli warns that "whoever imagines that new services will extinguish the memory of former injuries amongst great men deceives himself" (Machiavelli, 70). Stating that it is wrong to trust someone who has previously been injured. Barabas is wrong in his belief that he can trust Ferneze because Barabas killed Ferneze's son. Minshull suggests that "Marlowe could not have

been unaware of the gulf between Machiavelli's creed personified by Barabas, and Machiavelli's actual teaching, because he makes Ferneze and the Christians ruling Malta astutely put into practice Machiavelli's major political axioms" (Minshull, 45). Minshull's argument is possibly based on the consideration that Marlowe's treatment of the Catholics is related to Machiavelli because Machiavelli represents the image of villainy, whereas the opposite can be suggested of Barabas whose lack of Machiavellian policy might make him less abhorrent and might also create sympathy because of his ignorance of such political considerations. Barabas' downfall, resulting from his trust in Ferneze, according to Minshull, comes because he has not followed a proper Machiavellian policy. Minshull's argument further demonstrates Marlowe's awareness of Machiavelli, the employment of whose creed offers a range of political implications. Marlowe presents a variety of examples of how to capture power, and Machiavelli's teachings seem to be similar to many events in the play. The following example from *The Prince* can be applied to Ferneze and his ability to disguise: "It is necessary to know well how to disguise the characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived" (Machiavelli, 62). Machiavelli's ideas find their way into Ferneze's behaviour when he dissembles and pretends. Machiavelli uses the example of Alexander VI in his demonstration of pretence and dissembling:

Alexander VI never did anything, never thought of anything other than to deceive men, and always found subjects to whom he could do it. And never was there a man who had greater success in asserting, and with greater oaths in affirming a thing, who observed it less; nonetheless, the deceptions always succeeded for him because he knew well this part of the world. (Machiavelli *The Prince*, XVIII, 66)

Marlowe's depiction of Ferneze is similar to Machiavelli's example: In both cases, rulers lead others through deceit. It is necessary, according to Machiavelli, for *The Prince* to have "a spirit disposed to turn as the winds and the variations of fortune command him" (Burchard 59). Marlowe is staging Machiavellian situations to present a ruler who can defeat others even if he is not in a powerful position, as is the case with Ferneze, the prisoner. Marlowe's ability to present Ferneze as being able to adapt himself suitably must reflect Marlowe's desire to depict Machiavellianism.

Potter argues that Marlowe links Machiavellian policy with Catholicism in the character of Ferneze, writing that “The Jew of Malta emphasised the evil of Christians—for instance, by doubling Machiavelli with Ferneze” (Potter 68). This suggestion also implies the validity of the idea that Minshull articulates, that “if anyone in the play conforms to the Machiavellian code set out in the Prologue to the play, it is not Barabas, but Ferneze, who in true Machiavellian fashion is primarily interested in power politics and military matters” (Minshull, 41). Earlier in the chapter, Pineas stresses that it is Catholicism, not Christianity, which is being satirised (Pineas 9). Whereas Potter (Potter 99) refers to the “wickedness of all Christians.” Each writer ascribes the play's satire to either Christianity and/or Catholicism; but considering Marlowe's representation of Catholicism, specifically in the other two plays, it is possible to claim that it is, indeed, Catholicism on which the play focuses rather than Christianity in general. For Marlowe's audiences, at least, any sign of Machiavellianism as they understood it would automatically be associated with Catholicism, and this is also how recent critics, such as Pineas, have read the play. This indicates that the implementation of politics, whether Machiavellian or not, can, in reality, be attributed to Ferneze, more than to Barabas, because of his ability to manage the state and make wise decisions. Ferneze's policy indicates a knowledge of political machinations which is seen in his treatment of the situation in Malta. Ellis-Fermor discusses policy concerning Barabas rather than Ferneze, noting how Barabas reacts to that issue in comparison to the Catholics. Ellis-Fermor states that Barabas adopts “policie,” which is the Catholics' profession, defined by its association with “cunningness,” “wickedness,” and “cruelty.” Such features are seen in the Catholics in the play. Ellis-Fermor adds that Barabas takes up their “own weapon against them, as it is the only one remaining to him,” “but he never deceives himself; he becomes perforce a Machiavellian in his tactics, not a blind hypocrite as are his opponents” (Ellis-Fermor 99):

As good dissemble that thou never mean'st  
 As first meane truth, and then dissemble it,  
 A counterfeit profession is better  
 Than unseen hypocrisie.  
 (JM I, ii, 289–292)

Ellis-Fermor's suggestion that Barabas is implementing Machiavellianism is correct. However, it is not obvious what type of tactics she refers to since the downfall of Barabas comes largely from his tactical mistake of trusting an old enemy. If there is

any implementation of Machiavellianism by Barabas, it is certainly not political but rather that which is related to villainy. In light of what Ellis-Fermor suggests, it is vital to define what "policy" means, because "Barabas' ability to maintain any kind of policy is related, in the first place, only to villainy" (Al-Mutawa 174).

On the other hand, Marlowe might be revealing Barabas as incapable of implementing Machiavellian policy, which is related to governing the state. Having identified Barabas' incapability to follow Machiavellian policy, Marlowe demonstrates that the true danger lies in the Catholics because of their ability to apply Machiavellian policy, unlike Barabas, who ostensibly has no background of statecraft despite his Machiavellian bent. Ellis-Fermor's argument seems to go in one direction, that Barabas' Machiavellianism is related to every aspect of evil Machiavelli was known for, except handling matters of the state. In addition, Barabas implements what Catholics implemented, that is, Machiavellian villainies. The Machiavellian tactics Fermor refers to are simply those which are associated with Machiavellian villainies, not politics. Discussing the treacheries of Machiavellianism, Iwasaki argues that "Barabas fails to follow Machiavellianism, and so fails as a result of his miscalculation of how to act in the right place" (Iwasaki 12). Barabas fails when he believes Ferneze and fails again when he betrays the Turks. Marlowe does not depict any obvious hostility between Barabas and the Turks, who do not seem to be his enemies; it is his inaccurate calculations that reveal his political inexperience in betraying the Turks unnecessarily. Ferneze's behaviour is accurately assessed by Holmes, who describes loyalty as a form of deceit, hiding which side he truly favours. We have noted above how clever Ferneze is in his dealings with Barabas when he pretends to warn him that Malta will be destroyed under his rule. Of clear relevance here is the opinion of Holmes, about two contemporary Catholic writers whose example is similar to what we shall see in Ferneze:

"It was all very well for Allen (1546-1610) and Parsons (1532-1594), who were contemporaries of Marlowe and who was related to responses to the Spanish Armada and the circumstances under which Marlowe was writing, to cover the difficulties of their ideological position with rhetorical professions of loyalty to the Queen. But if asked directly to choose between the Pope and the Queen they had to resort to sophistry or silence." (Holmes 46)

The way Ferneze acts in his attempt to hide his evil from Barabas reminds the reader of the situation to which Holmes refers, where Catholic writers attempted to hide

their true beliefs. Marlowe could also be recalling this example in which he brings Ferneze forward to deceive Barabas and act as if he is advising Barabas. Ferneze uses such pretence to mislead Barabas. He knows that to recapture power he has to make Barabas reluctant to carry the responsibility of the governorship. Ferneze does manage to eliminate Barabas politically while he is still governor, causing him to hate the role and so to relinquish it and offer a truce to Ferneze. He returns to the political domain by cleverly engineering a reconciliation with Barabas, which begins the shift of political power back towards him.

The success of Ferneze in handling the political affairs of Malta seems to reflect Marlowe's ascription to him of Machiavellian attributes. Ferneze is capable of this political success because he remains powerful even when immediate power is taken from him. Marlowe, by representing Machiavellian theory in his plays, stands among his contemporaries who also discussed and represented Machiavelli for an Elizabethan audience. Machiavellianism, as described by Marlowe, offers insight into many thematic representations regarding policy, power and control. The discussion of both characters implies similarity with many of Machiavelli's works in different ways.

### **Conclusion**

The Jews of Malta provide a rich illustration of the religious and political influence of the struggle between Barabas and Farnese. Barabas resistance can be seen as a manifestation of the situation in which Marlow wrote that such resistance to unreliable Catholics was necessary. Machiavellianism is obvious in Ferneze, but contradictory in Barabas. Machiavelli's portrayal of Marlowe can be seen as a reflection of his perception of how Machiavelli was portrayed. Meanwhile, Marlow reveals how Catholics abuse authority to hurt Barabas and others. The play's criticism of Catholicism is evident in the treatment of Ferneze and his brothers. Pineas argues that "Marlowe's play exhibits the usual picture of corrupt Catholic friars; it introduces the new element of an outside spectator and commentator on that corruption, in the person of the Jew, Barabas" (Pineas 9). Barabas removes the masks of his brothers and reveals how unholy they are. This is a way to show Marlowe's interest in portraying devout Catholic accusations and plots. This play, which provides insights into many of Machiavelli's characteristics of politics, power, and domination, shows Marlowe's interest in the issue of political-religious interaction. Both *Massacre at Paris* and *The Jew of Malta* are plays depicting Machiavellian themes of power: the power of force used to conquer lands, subjects and kings, also the power of fraud used to gain personal wealth and destruction

of enemies. Machiavelli's composite image, created by the fusion of Ferneze's qualities and Barabas' qualities, is the image of a powerful, proud, cruel, violent, deceptive, and endlessly ambitious man. He lives a tragic career that begins with hatred, is helped by crafts, and ends with underestimating the abilities of others and overestimating his power to avoid death. Each Machiavelli can change his fate in his way for some time, but fate eventually learns to bind *The Prince* to the wheel of fortune and rob him of success and fame to bring him back.

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