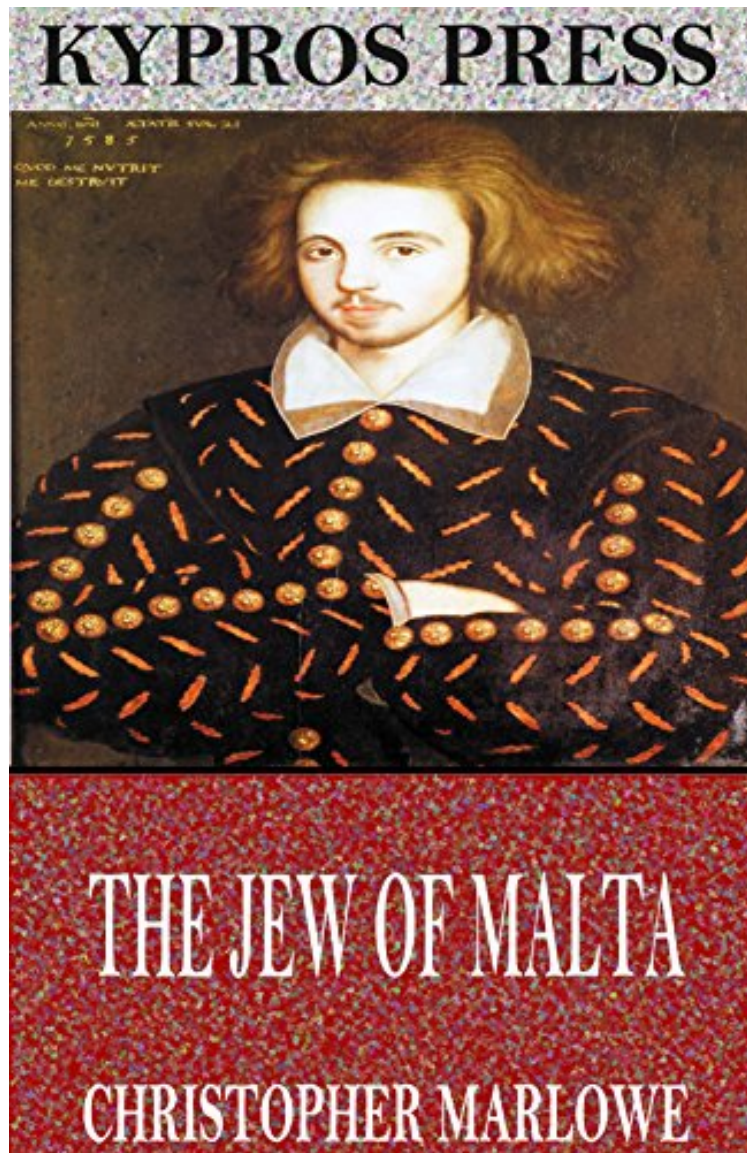


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## The Jew of Malta

*Christopher Marlowe*

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Christopher Marlowe was one of the most famous playwrights in all of literature. Marlowe's tragic plays, noted for their blank verse and unique protagonists, were a great influence on the legendary William Shakespeare. Some of Marlowe's classics include *Doctor Faustus*, *Edward II*, and *Tamburlaine the Great*. *The Jew of Malta* is a classic play with themes such as religious conflict and revenge. This play is believed to have been a major influence on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. This edition includes a table of contents.

The great strength of Mathew Martin's edition is the ease of access it gives scholars and students to one of Marlowe's strangest and most disturbing plays. He achieves this not simply by exemplary annotations, but by framing Marlowe's text within an introduction and richly informative appendices that place the play securely in its contemporary social, cultural, and political contexts, enabling readers to negotiate complexities of tone and racial attitudes with subtle insight. The effect is precisely to highlight the daring originality of Marlowe's dramatic artistry and his exacting control of both the arts of performance and his audience's responses. Richard Allen Cave, Emeritus Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts, Royal Holloway, University of London

*The Jew of Malta* is one of early modern England's most controversial plays on its most controversial topic: the collision of world religions. Martin's terrific new edition brilliantly captures the gist of its cut-and-thrust. The introduction offers readers a sophisticated entrée into Anglo-Ottoman relations, European anti-Semitism, theatre history, and Machiavellianism. The edition is elegantly edited, with many resources for readers who want to understand one of Marlowe's greatest plays in its historical milieu.

Alan Shepard, President of Concordia University

From the Back Cover First performed by Shakespeare's rivals in the 1590s, Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* was a trend-setting, innovative play whose black comedy and final tragic irony illuminate the darker regions of the Elizabethan cultural imagination. Although Jews were banished from England in 1291, the Jew in the form of Barabas, the play's protagonist, returns on the stage to embody and to challenge the dramatic and cultural anti-Semitic stereotypes out of which he is constructed. The result is a theatrically sophisticated but deeply unsettling play whose rich cultural significance extends beyond the early modern period to the present day. The introduction and historical documents in this edition provide a rich context for the world of the play's composition and production, including materials on Jewishness and anti-Semitism, the political struggles over Malta, and Christopher Marlowe's personal and political reputation.

About the Author Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) was an English playwright and poet, who through his establishment of blank verse as a medium for drama did much to free the Elizabethan theatre from the constraints of the medieval and Tudor dramatic tradition. His first play "*Tamburlaine the Great*," was performed that same year, probably by the Admiral's Men with Edward Alleyn in the lead. With its swaggering power-hungry title character and gorgeous verse the play proved to be enormously popular; Marlowe quickly wrote a second part, which may have been produced later that year. Marlowe's most famous play, "*The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*," based on the medieval German legend of the scholar who sold his soul to the devil, was probably written and produced by 1590, although it was not published until 1604. Historically the play is important for utilizing the soliloquy as an aid to character analysis and development. "*The Jew of Malta*" (c. 1590) has another unscrupulous aspiring character at its centre in the Machiavellian Barabas. "*Edward II*" (c. 1592), which may have influenced Shakespeare's *Richard II*, was highly innovative in its treatment of a historical character and formed an important break with the more simplistic chronicle plays that had preceded it. Marlowe also wrote two lesser plays, "*Dido, Queen of Carthage*" (date unknown) and "*The Massacre at Paris*" (1593), based on contemporary events in France. Marlowe was killed in a London tavern in May 1593. Although Marlowe's writing career lasted for only six years, his four major plays make him easily the most important predecessor of Shakespeare.