

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The Merchant of Venice



FULLY ANNOTATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY **BURTON RAFFEL**

WITH AN ESSAY BY **HAROLD BLOOM**

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To the memory of my father, my mother,
my brother, and all the others

CONTENTS



About This Book ix

Introduction xvii

Some Essentials of the Shakespearean Stage xxxiii

The Merchant of Venice i

An Essay by Harold Bloom 151

Further Reading 159

Finding List 165

ABOUT THIS BOOK



The learned doctor of the law, Belario, is never seen or heard on stage. But the chief judge, the Duke of Venice, reads aloud a letter from Belario:

Duke Meantime the court shall hear Belario's letter:
(*reading aloud*) "Your Grace shall understand, that at the receipt of your letter I am very sick, but in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young Doctor of Rome, his name is Balthasar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant. We turned o'er many books together. He is furnished with my opinion, which bettered with his own learning (the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend), comes with him at my importunity to fill up your Grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation."

This was perfectly understandable, we must assume, to the mostly very average persons who paid to watch Elizabethan plays. But though much remains clear, who today can make full or entirely comfortable sense of it? In this very fully annotated edition, I therefore present this passage, not in the bare form quoted above, but thoroughly supported by bottom-of-the-page notes:

Duke Meantime the court shall hear Belario's letter:
(*reading aloud*)¹ "Your Grace shall understand, that at the receipt of your letter I am² very sick, but in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor³ of Rome, his name is Balthasar. I acquainted him with the cause⁴ in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant. We turned o'er⁵ many books together. He is furnished with my opinion, which bettered⁶ with his own learning (the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend), comes⁷ with him at my importunity⁸ to fill up your Grace's request in my stead.⁹ I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend¹⁰ estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gra-

1 it is not clear whether it is the Duke or a court official who reads the letter aloud

2 was

3 lawyer

4 case, action*

5 turned over = read through, searched, perused

6 improved

7 i.e., Belario's opinion comes

8 solicitation, urging

9 (it is not clear exactly what the Duke has requested of Belario)

10 respectful, courteous

cious acceptance, whose trial¹¹ shall better publish¹² his commendation.”

Without full explanation of words that have over the years shifted in meaning, and usages that have been altered, neither the modern reader nor the modern listener is likely to be equipped for anything like full comprehension.

I believe annotations of this sort create the necessary bridges, from Shakespeare’s four-centuries-old English across to ours. Some readers, to be sure, will be able to comprehend unusual, historically different meanings without any glosses. Those not familiar with the modern meaning of particular words will easily find clear, simple definitions in any modern dictionary. But most readers are not likely to understand Shakespeare’s intended meaning, absent such glosses as I here offer.

My annotation practices have followed the same principles used in *The Annotated Milton*, published in 1999, and in my annotated editions of *Hamlet*, published (as the initial volume in this series) in 2003, *Romeo and Juliet* (published in 2004), and subsequent volumes in this series. Classroom experience has validated these editions. Classes of mixed upper-level undergraduates and graduate students have more quickly and thoroughly transcended language barriers than ever before. This allows the teacher, or a general reader without a teacher, to move more promptly and confidently to the nonlinguistic matters that have made Shakespeare and Milton great and important poets.

It is the inevitable forces of linguistic change, operant in all liv-

¹¹ putting to the proof, testing (“performance”)

¹² declare

ing tongues, which have inevitably created such wide degrees of obstacles to ready comprehension—not only sharply different meanings, but subtle, partial shifts in meaning that allow us to think we understand when, alas, we do not. Speakers of related languages like Dutch and German also experience this shifting of the linguistic ground. Like early Modern English (ca. 1600) and the Modern English now current, those languages are too close for those who know only one language, and not the other, to be readily able always to recognize what they correctly understand and what they do not. When, for example, a speaker of Dutch says, “Men kofer is kapot,” a speaker of German will know that something belonging to the Dutchman is broken (“kapot” = “kaputt” in German, and “men” = “mein”). But without more linguistic awareness than the average person is apt to have, the German speaker will not identify “kofer” (“trunk” in Dutch) with “Körper”—a modern German word meaning “physique, build, body.” The closest word to “kofer” in modern German, indeed, is “Scrankschiffer,” which is too large a leap for ready comprehension. Speakers of different Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian), and all other related but not identical tongues, all experience these difficulties, as well as the difficulty of understanding a text written in their own language five, or six, or seven hundred years earlier. Shakespeare’s English is not yet so old that it requires, like many historical texts in French and German, or like Old English texts—for example, *Beowulf*—a modern translation. Much poetry evaporates in translation: language is immensely particular. The sheer *sound* of Dante in thirteenth-century Italian is profoundly worth preserving. So too is the sound of Shakespeare.

I have annotated prosody (metrics) only when it seemed

truly necessary or particularly helpful. Readers should have no problem with the silent “e” in past participles (loved, returned, missed). Except in the few instances where modern usage syllabifies the “e,” whenever an “e” in Shakespeare is *not* silent, it is marked “è.” The notation used for prosody, which is also used in the explanation of Elizabethan pronunciation, follows the extremely simple form of my *From Stress to Stress: An Autobiography of English Prosody* (see “Further Reading,” near the end of this book). Syllables with metrical stress are capitalized; all other syllables are in lowercase letters. I have managed to employ normalized Elizabethan spellings, in most indications of pronunciation, but I have sometimes been obliged to deviate, in the higher interest of being understood.

I have annotated, as well, a limited number of such other matters, sometimes of interpretation, sometimes of general or historical relevance, as have seemed to me seriously worthy of inclusion. These annotations have been most carefully restricted: this is not intended to be a book of literary commentary. It is for that reason that the glossing of metaphors has been severely restricted. There is almost literally no end to discussion and/or analysis of metaphor, especially in Shakespeare. To yield to temptation might well be to double or triple the size of this book—and would also change it from a historically oriented language guide to a work of an unsteadily mixed nature. In the process, I believe, neither language nor literature would be well or clearly served.

Where it seemed useful, and not obstructive of important textual matters, I have modernized spelling, including capitalization. Spelling is not on the whole a basic issue, but punctuation and lineation must be given high respect. The Quarto uses few exclamation marks or semicolons, which is to be sure a matter of the

conventions of a very different era. Still, our modern preferences cannot be lightly substituted for what is, after a fashion, the closest thing to a Shakespeare manuscript we are likely ever to have. We do not know whether these particular seventeenth-century printers, like most of that time, were responsible for question marks, commas, periods, and, especially, all-purpose colons, or whether these particular printers tried to follow their handwritten sources. Nor do we know if those sources, or what part thereof, might have been in Shakespeare's own hand. But in spite of these equivocations and uncertainties, it remains true that, to a very considerable extent, punctuation tends to result from just how the mind responsible for that punctuating *hears* the text. And twenty-first-century minds have no business, in such matters, overruling seventeenth-century ones. Whoever the composers were, they were more or less Shakespeare's contemporaries, and we are not.

Accordingly, when the original printed text uses a comma, we are being signaled that *they* (whoever "they" were) heard the text, not coming to a syntactic stop, but continuing to some later stopping point. To replace commas with editorial periods is thus risky and on the whole an undesirable practice. (The dramatic action of a tragedy, to be sure, may require us, for twenty-first-century readers, to highlight what four-hundred-year-old punctuation standards may not make clear—and may even, at times, misrepresent.)

When the printed text has a colon, what we are being signaled is that *they* heard a syntactic stop—though not necessarily or even usually the particular kind of syntactic stop we associate, today, with the colon. It is therefore inappropriate to substitute editorial commas for original colons. It is also inappropriate to employ editorial colons when *their* syntactic usage of colons does not match

ours. In general, the closest thing to *their* syntactic sense of the colon is our (and their) period.

The printed interrogation (question) marks, too, merit extremely respectful handling. In particular, editorial exclamation marks should very rarely be substituted for interrogation marks.

It follows from these considerations that the movement and sometimes the meaning of what we must take to be Shakespeare's play will at times be different, depending on whose punctuation we follow, *theirs* or our own. I have tried, here, to use the printed seventeenth-century text as a guide to both *hearing* and *understanding* what Shakespeare wrote.

Since the original printed texts (there not being, as there never are for Shakespeare, any surviving manuscripts) are frequently careless as well as self-contradictory, I have been relatively free with the wording of stage directions—and in some cases have added brief directions, to indicate who is speaking to whom. I have made no emendations; I have necessarily been obliged to make choices. Textual decisions have been annotated when the differences between or among the original printed texts seem either marked or of unusual interest.

In the interests of compactness and brevity, I have employed in my annotations (as consistently as I am able) a number of stylistic and typographical devices:

- The annotation of a single word does not repeat that word
- The annotation of more than one word repeats the words being annotated, which are followed by an equals sign and then by the annotation; the footnote number in the text is placed after the last of the words being annotated
- In annotations of a single word, alternative meanings are

usually separated by commas; if there are distinctly different ranges of meaning, the annotations are separated by arabic numerals inside parentheses—(1), (2), and so on; in more complexly worded annotations, alternative meanings expressed by a single word are linked by a forward slash, or solidus: /

- Explanations of textual meaning are not in parentheses; comments about textual meaning are
- Except for proper nouns, the word at the beginning of all annotations is in lower case
- Uncertainties are followed by a question mark, set in parentheses: (?)
- When particularly relevant, “translations” into twenty-first-century English have been added, in parentheses
- Annotations of repeated words are *not* repeated. Explanations of the *first* instance of such common words are followed by the sign ★. Readers may easily track down the first annotation, using the brief Finding List at the back of the book. Words with entirely separate meanings are annotated *only* for meanings no longer current in Modern English.

The most important typographical device here employed is the sign ★ placed after the first (and only) annotation of words and phrases occurring more than once. There is an alphabetically arranged listing of such words and phrases in the Finding List at the back of the book. The Finding List contains no annotations but simply gives the words or phrases themselves and the numbers of the relevant act, the scene within that act, and the footnote number within that scene for the word’s first occurrence.

INTRODUCTION



Written in the period 1596–1598, *The Merchant of Venice* was first printed in 1600. This quarto-sized book, which has become the basic text for all modern editions, also gives us, directly and immediately via the volume's title page, a good idea of what the printer-publisher thought was most worthy of public attention. "The most excellent history of the Merchant of Venice, with the extreme cruelty of Shylock the Jew towards the said merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh, and the obtaining of Portia by the choice of three chests."¹ The Quarto text is so clean that scholars think it was quite probably printed directly from Shakespeare's manuscript. Whether or not Shakespeare had anything to do with the title page (most likely he did not), the description of the play focuses on three plot lines: first, Antonio the merchant of Venice; second, Shylock, the rapacious, almost fiendish Jewish moneylender; and third, the courting—by an odd sort of lottery-like procedure—and winning of Portia, a singularly wealthy young heiress. Note that the most intensely dramatic portion of the description is that concerning Shylock, who has often been mistak-

only thought of as the “merchant” of the play’s title. The writer of the title page plainly saw Shylock’s part of the narrative as the play’s best selling aspect.

As is so often the case with Shakespeare, many elements of the story are borrowed, in this case principally from *Il Pecorone* (“The Blockhead”), a collection of stories published in Florence in 1558 and not at that time translated into English. It has been argued, sensibly and on the basis of the totality of Shakespeare’s work, that he could read Italian. The details of the original tale are of some interest, but will not be here discussed: what is most relevant to readers of this edition is how Shakespeare presents material from all his sources, and thus how it seems most accurately and usefully to read his play as we have it.

The Merchant of Venice comes early in what might be called Shakespeare’s “middle” period, shortly after *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and just before *Henry the Fourth, Part One*. The play features a good deal of the “low” comedy to be seen in *The Taming of the Shrew*, which dates from roughly four years earlier. There is also, in the more “serious” parts of the play (those in verse rather than in prose), some of the most beautifully worked-out passages Shakespeare ever wrote:

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

(I.I.7–13)

Spoken by one of the minor characters, Salarino, about the merchant Antonio, these seven lines are composed of a single tightly woven sea-metaphor. The passage traces Antonio's state of mind, subtly employing the nature of his profession to give us two trains of thought at the same time: the preoccupations of Antonio's mind, and the preoccupations of his business. The passage is also a bold proclamation of the poet-playwright's superb literary mastery. We do not need to know who or what Shakespeare was, nor do we need to understand every one of these lines in detail, to realize that we have here been launched on a tautly controlled literary-dramatic expedition.

But just as there are necessary limitations to our ability to understand all of Shakespeare's *words*, so too there are broader aspects of the play that are historically conditioned and not fully comprehensible without explanation. In matters of religious belief, even matters of knowledge, *The Merchant of Venice* must be approached, today, with caution. We know little about Shakespeare's life (though more than enough to have no doubt that he wrote his plays). We know virtually nothing about his likes and dislikes, or (though he may sometimes seem to know everything knowable) the true extent of his knowledge. He must have enjoyed success, or he would hardly have worked so intensely at achieving it. He used his money to buy land, and to purchase a coat of arms. But who does not enjoy success? Who in a land-dominated culture does not value its ownership? Who in a fiercely status-conscious society does not desire a degree of status?

We must be particularly careful not to lean on a tremendously effective and enormously popular comic drama, trying to place it in an ideological schema—like that which we have come to call anti-Semitism—in which it has little if any legitimate place.

Shakespeare surely shared much of the experience common to most Elizabethans. But though incredibly gifted, he remains no more than human. Most of the people he knew were Christian, and he had to know a good deal about that faith. Did he know any Muslims, and what did he know about Islam? There is a total lack of evidence. But did he know any Jews, and what did he know about Judaism? The play plainly seems to be deeply concerned with both Jews and Judaism; Shylock and his daughter are major players in the plot. But what is the true role and importance of their stated religious identity? How much are either Jews or Judaism the play's concerns?

The Merchant of Venice is dramatic fiction, and fiction is by definition pretense: the writer tries (and Shakespeare brilliantly succeeds) in making us believe in his fiction. The writer (and even more, the good writer) rarely has much interest in persuading us that his fiction is fact. No matter how devoted he or she may be to a cause or to a belief system, it is the fiction that matters the most—to the writer as to us. When we learn that in fact, despite an ancient expulsion of the Jews, “there were Jews in Shakespeare’s England,” what have we learned about Shakespeare’s play? When we are told, further, that the number of such Jews was “probably never more than a couple of hundred at any given time,” have we any useful information about either Shakespeare or his play?² On the other hand, knowing that “a villainous Jewish usurer was being portrayed on the London stage some twenty years before *The Merchant of Venice* was written” seems decidedly relevant, for this helps us understand the background from which the play emerged.³ Similarly, it is useful to know that “England’s fascination with the conversion of the Jews had begun in earnest

in the late 1570s and early 1580s and was quite well established by the time that Shakespeare wrote *The Merchant of Venice*.”⁴

James Shapiro, who has made a thorough study of the matter, explains that “the word *Jew* had entered into the English vocabulary in the thirteenth century as a catchall term of abuse.” Noting “such stock epithets as ‘I hate thee as I do a Jew,’ ‘I would not have done so to a Jew,’ and ‘None but a Jew would have done so,’” he concludes that “the Jew as irredeemable alien and the Jew as bogeyman . . . coexisted at deep linguistic and psychological levels.”⁵ As John Gross puts the matter, “Nothing can alter the fact that, seen through the eyes of the other characters, Shylock is a deeply threatening figure, and that the threat he poses is of a peculiarly primitive kind.”⁶ We need to add that what “the eyes of the other characters” truly means, here, is “Elizabethan England,” the citizens of which were of course the intended and the actual audience of the play (and the readers of its Quarto publication).

We also need to understand that Elizabethan England had only relatively recently been caught up in the Renaissance transformation of European economies. We know that, unlike Mediterranean economies, “there were no private moneychangers in medieval London” and that, although “from the fifteenth century onwards London goldsmiths were beginning to engage in deposit banking,” no such effective system was in place in England until the end of the seventeenth century.⁷ Thus, Europe’s long record of hostility to money lending, and the interest charged thereon, had been largely dissipated in countries like Italy but lingered in countries like England. “By the end of the sixteenth century, . . . Jews were increasingly identified [in England] not with usury per se, but with outrageous and exploitative lending for profit.”⁸ In-

deed, "Shakespeare's 'alien' Shylock cannot really be understood independent of the larger social tensions generated by aliens and their economic practices in London in the mid-1590s."⁹ It is in no way surprising that "most moneylenders in Elizabethan literature were thoroughly sadistic."¹⁰

Accordingly, if we ask, as Martin D. Yaffe does, how "are we meant to understand Shylock's Jewishness," the answer seems reasonably clear.¹¹ Despite the power of Shylock's two speeches of protest, the nature of his Jewishness is both vague and elusive. Perhaps, for our purposes, today, it ought to be considered largely symbolic. Shakespeare's compatriots did not want or need more than that. It is therefore completely appropriate for that symbolic representation to say, as Shylock does at the approach of Antonio, "I hate him for he is a Christian" (1.3.36). It is equally appropriate for Shylock's daughter to say to Gobbo, the clown who is leaving Shylock's employ in order to be with a good Christian employer, "I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so. / Our house is hell, and thou a merry divel / Did'st rob it of some taste of tediousness" (2.3.1-3). Or for her to say, on the same subject, "But though I am a daughter to his [Shylock's] blood, / I am not to his manners" (2.3.7-8). Similarly, Lorenzo, Jessica's Christian lover and future husband, can declare with the absolute confidence of anyone who confronts a mere totem, "If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven, / It will be for his gentle daughter's sake" (2.4.34-35).

In short, "Shylock's stage-Judaism is a pseudo-religion, a fabrication: there is no true piety in it, and nothing to hold him back as he pursues his revenge."¹² We can no more go to *The Merchant of Venice* for perspectives on, or information about Jews and Judaism, than we can go *Hamlet* for guidance on Renaissance Dan-

ish manners and mores, or to *Anthony and Cleopatra* to help us understand Egypt during the great years of Rome. This is not to deprecate any of these splendid dramas, for no one in their right mind would or should approach Shakespeare's plays on non-English subjects in this way.

Still, *The Merchant of Venice* being a great play by the greatest of playwrights, the situation is inevitably somewhat more complex. Shakespeare's mind is so quick, his heart has so many deep and broad chambers, that he cannot simply sketch out his major figures as cartoon characters. He is as it were obliged to engage them as human beings. In the first of Shylock's two magnificently humanizing speeches, he speaks to Antonio, in the course of loan negotiations:

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
 In the Rialto you have rated me
 About my monies and my usances.
 Still have I borne it with a patient shrug
 (For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe).
 You call me misbeliever, cutthroat dog,
 And spit upon my Jewish gabardine,
 And all for use of that which is mine own.
 Well then, it now appears you need my help.
 Go to then, you come to me, and you say
 Shylock, we would have monies, you say so.
 You that did void your rheum upon my beard,
 And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
 Over your threshold, monies is your suit.
 What should I say to you? Should I not say,
 Hath a dog money? Is it possible

A cur should lend three thousand ducats? Or
 Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key
 With bated breath, and whispering humbleness,
 Say this: Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last,
 You spurned me such a day, another time
 You called me dog, and for these courtesies
 I'll lend you thus much monies?

(1.3.100–122)

Shakespeare is not, in this speech, entering into any of the economic and religious issues that have been touched upon, albeit lightly, in this introductory essay. He is simply engaging, on levels few can reach, with a character in pain. He does this with Shylock on one more occasion, this time in prose rather than in verse:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands,
 organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions, fed with the
 same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same
 diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by
 the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick
 us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you
 poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not
 revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you
 in that. (3.1.49–57)

Shakespeare's intention in both these deservedly famous passages is not to justify Shylock's fierce cruelty. He is straightforwardly depicting a character, in the depth that he as a writer needed to attain. What he has achieved is in a sense a natural by-product of his genius rather than anything intrinsic to some general view of Jews and Jewishness, which is to some degree the

nominal subject matter of his play. And Shylock's piercing humanity, as thus achieved, does not affect that nominal subject matter, any more than it does the narrative course of the play. Shylock is silenced and punished (both fiscally and by being compelled to accept baptism as a Christian) according to then-prevailing views of the fundamental nonhumanity of Jews and Jewishness. Is there a contradiction between the human Shylock and these attacks on what is obviously considered the nonhuman nature of Jews and Jewishness? Of course there is—if we attempt to frame *The Merchant of Venice* as an ideological drama, even an exposition of how Shakespeare himself viewed Jews and Jewishness. The play was no more conceived in such terms than *The Taming of the Shrew* was meant as a savage assault on women or than *The Tempest* was intended to be a close critique of magic or the behavior of magicians.

Recall the description of the play on the Quarto's 1600 title page. Antonio is clearly one of its three focal points, and he is a major player. But Shakespeare does little more with him than make him, as he makes Shylock, what the American novelist Henry James liked to call a *ficelle*: a stage device, used to pull plot strings. When he is required to be melancholy, he is melancholy, and when that need has passed, he ceases to be melancholy. When he is called upon to be somewhat unusually fond of Bassanio—though not so unusually fond as might appear in our twenty-first century, for there is absolutely nothing sexual in his part—Antonio ascends to the occasion. He can be loyal, he can be long-suffering—everything that he needs to be and, aside from the characteristic Shakespearean elegance with which he speaks, not a great deal more. Antonio works quite satisfactorily, in a role thus delimited; his characterization will not bear any large, close examination. For example, when he tells us, after the fact, why he thinks Shylock hates him, he claims circumstances never previ-

ously mentioned and not fully consistent with what has been told us: "He seeks my life, his reason well I know. / I oft delivered from his forfeitures / Many that have at times made moan to me, / Therefore he hates me" (3.3.21–24). The abusive episodes that Shylock has described are not here recalled. Neither is Antonio's bland statement, after Shylock's biting recitation, "I am as like to call thee so again, / To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too" (1.3.123–124). These are obviously not issues relevant to Antonio's *ficelle*-like status.

But the third and last-named of *Merchant's* three centers of attention, Portia, has an immense part in the play's comedy of courtship and, finally, its light and witty romanticism—which occupies the whole of the fifth and last act. In act 1, scene 2, Portia is the very model of maidenly wisdom and, as to the other sex, cynicism. "I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching" (14–16). More directly, she asks her lady in waiting, Nerissa, "I may neither choose whom I would, nor refuse whom I dislike, so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?" (20–24). By the end of the scene, having rather scorchingly reviewed some of the many candidates for her hand, she sighs over yet another would-be husband: "If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach. If he have the condition of a saint, and the complexion of a divel, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me. Come Nerissa. Sirrah go before. Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another knocks at the door" (113–119).

She doggedly deals with, and is rid of, a number of failed suitors—until suddenly, there is an unknown and unnamed one an-

nounced by a messenger—that is, a servant. Portia's witty comments to the messenger, as she makes his break off his praise of this unknown, exhibit a new excitement: "No more, I pray thee. I am half afeared / Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee, / Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him" (2.9.96–98). The Elizabethan audience would have had no trouble understanding that the relative of a messenger would have no business courting a high-upper-class woman who consorts on equal terms with princes. This swift fillip, stirring up the courtship plot, is genially and very effectively tossed off.

In act 3, scene 2 we see Portia in a more sobered state. The unknown suitor has been the one she most wanted, Bassanio, and he is impatient to take the test that will either win her or lose her. "I would detain you here some month or two," she tells him, "Before you venture for me" (9–10). Plainly, she wants to be with him but not to risk being unable to be with him any longer, if he fails the test. She does not think he will fail it. But just the same, she is cautious. And he, male and impetuous (as well as fiscally desperate, a condition her immense wealth would instantly cure), wants to move ahead as quickly as possible. As he steps through the casket maze, sweet music is played, and sung, creating a perfect atmosphere for romantic success. Portia sees it coming, for she knows which choice would be the right one, and speaks in an aside of her maidenly wish not to hurry this wonderful thing to its death:

O love, be moderate, allay thy ecstasy,
 In measure rein thy joy, scant this excess.
 I feel too much thy blessing, make it less,
 For fear I surfeit.

(112–115)

He prevails—and makes the right choice, she is his. In a dazed, happy confusion he tells her he is “doubtful whether what I see be true, / Until confirmed, signed, ratified by you” (148–149). Portia speaks with a wisdom ripening right before our eyes:

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
 Such as I am. Though for myself alone
 I would not be ambitious in my wish
 To wish myself much better, yet for you
 I would be trebled twenty times myself,
 A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
 More rich, that only to stand high in your account
 I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
 Exceed account. But the full sum of me
 Is sum of something – which to term in gross,
 Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpracticed,
 Happy in this, she is not yet so old
 But she may learn, happier than this,
 She is not bred so dull but she can learn.

(150–163)

The glow of an exceedingly good marriage to come is all over her words. This is in the best sense comedy—that is, drama with a happy ending. Act 5 will extend this most beautifully.

But before Portia and Bassanio can reach that point, the danger Antonio is in, because of Shylock's fierce malice, must be dealt with. Bassanio rushes off to help. Portia, already wiser than he is in the real ways of the world, takes an indirect but distinctly more functional route. Knowing Antonio's is a case in law, being tried in court, she obtains from a learned cousin the best legal advice available—and also the appropriate legal robes, for she proposes

to handle the case herself, in court. Armed and efficient, she sails into court, where the chief judge is the Duke of Venice himself.

Duke Came you from old Belario?

Portia I did my lord.

Duke You are welcome, take your place.

Are you acquainted with the difference

That holds this present question in the court?

Portia I am informed thoroughly of the cause.

Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?

(4.1.166–171)

Portia's disguise is complete and so effective that her husband (they have been married but their marriage has not yet been consummated) does not recognize her. Her masterly aplomb, indeed, is utterly lawyer-like. In fact, when she has ended the case in a completely satisfactory way (satisfactory, that is, to her side, which is of course the play's good side), she turns to the clerk of court and directs, "Clerk, draw a deed of gift" (4.1.391). It is a total triumph, and yet another blow in Shakespeare's continuing endeavor to prove that, all other things being equal, women tend to significantly overmatch the men they deal with.

Act 5 opens with one of the other two pairs of happy lovers, Lorenzo and Jessica (Shylock's daughter), sitting in the garden of Portia's magnificent house. It is night; the setting is replete with the stigmata of romance:

Lorenzo The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,

When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees

And they did make no noise, in such a night

Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls,

And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents
Where Cressid lay that night.

(5.1.1–6)

Lorenzo and his new-wedded wife, Jessica (escaped from a Jewish “hell” into a haven of Christianized happiness), prettily toss back and forth a deft mixture of blossoms and barbs. Lorenzo again romanticizes, once again to the sort of sweet music that earlier accompanied Bassanio’s choosing among the three caskets:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears. Soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit Jessica, look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
There’s not the smallest orb which thou beholdst
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still chourcing to the young-eyed cherubins.
Such harmony is in immortal souls,
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close in it, we cannot hear it

(53–64)

Portia and Nerissa (whose unconsummated marriage to Gratiano constitutes them the third wedding pair) arrive. Portia’s first words strongly reinforce the tenor of act 5 thus far:

Portia That light we see is burning in my hall.
How far that little candle throws his beams.
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

(88–90)

But Shakespeare is far too accomplished a dramatist to end the play simply with flowers and moonshine. There follows a lovely barrage of teasing banter, in the course of which both Portia and Nerissa show, yet again, how vastly their husbands are over-matched by them. The men are reduced to submissive admissions of guilt and pledges for a guilt-free future:

Bassanio Nay, but hear me.
 Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear
 I never more will break an oath with thee.
(246–248)

The play is thus all but finished. In a very few more lines, Portia leads them all indoors, for what is indicated will be a set of most acceptable tripartite acts of marital consummation.

Notes

1. Spelling and punctuation modernized.
2. James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 76.
3. John Gross, *Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 18.
4. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 134.
5. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 24.
6. Gross, *Shylock*, 29.
7. Peter Spufford, *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 42.
8. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 99.
9. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 187.
10. Gross, *Shylock*, 50.
11. Martin D. Yaffe, *Shylock and the Jewish Question* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 4.
12. Gross, *Shylock*, 46.

SOME ESSENTIALS OF THE
SHAKESPEAREAN STAGE



The Stage

- There was no *scenery* (backdrops, flats, and so on).
- Compared to today's elaborate, high-tech productions, the Elizabethan stage had few *on-stage* props. These were mostly handheld: a sword or dagger, a torch or candle, a cup or flask. Larger props, such as furniture, were used sparingly.
- Costumes (some of which were upper-class castoffs, belonging to the individual actors) were elaborate. As in most premodern and very hierarchical societies, clothing was the distinctive mark of who and what a person was.
- What the actors *spoke*, accordingly, contained both the dramatic and narrative material we have come to expect in a theater (or movie house) and (1) the setting, including details of the time of day, the weather, and so on, and (2) the occasion. The *dramaturgy* is thus very different from that of our own time, requiring much more attention to verbal and gestural matters. Strict realism was neither intended nor, under the circumstances, possible.

- There was *no curtain*. Actors entered and left via doors in the back of the stage, behind which was the “tiring-room,” where actors put on or changed their costumes.
- In *public theaters* (which were open-air structures), there was no *lighting*; performances could take place only in daylight hours.
- For *private* theaters, located in large halls of aristocratic houses, candlelight illumination was possible.

The Actors

- Actors worked in *professional*, for-profit companies, sometimes organized and owned by other actors, and sometimes by entrepreneurs who could afford to erect or rent the company’s building. Public theaters could hold, on average, two thousand playgoers, most of whom viewed and listened while standing. Significant profits could be and were made. Private theaters were smaller, more exclusive.
- There was *no director*. A book-holder/prompter/props manager, standing in the tiring-room behind the backstage doors, worked from a text marked with entrances and exits and notations of any special effects required for that particular script. A few such books have survived. Actors had texts only of their own parts, speeches being cued to a few prior words. There were few and often no rehearsals, in our modern use of the term, though there was often some coaching of individuals. Since Shakespeare’s England was largely an oral culture, actors learned their parts rapidly and retained them for years. This was *repertory* theater, repeating popular plays and introducing some new ones each season.

- *Women* were not permitted on the professional stage. Most female roles were acted by *boys*; elderly women were played by grown men.

The Audience

- London's professional theater operated in what might be called a "red-light" district, featuring brothels, restaurants, and the kind of *open-air entertainment* then most popular, like bear-baiting (in which a bear, tied to a stake, was set on by dogs).
- A theater audience, like most of the population of Shakespeare's England, was largely made up of *illiterates*. Being able to read and write, however, had nothing to do with intelligence or concern with language, narrative, and characterization. People attracted to the theater tended to be both extremely verbal and extremely volatile. Actors were sometimes attacked, when the audience was dissatisfied; quarrels and fights were relatively common. Women were regularly in attendance, though no reliable statistics exist.
- Drama did not have the cultural esteem it has in our time, and plays were not regularly printed. Shakespeare's often appeared in book form, but not with any supervision or other involvement on his part. He wrote a good deal of nondramatic poetry as well, yet so far as we know he did not authorize or supervise *any* work of his that appeared in print during his lifetime.
- Playgoers, who had paid good money to see and hear, plainly gave dramatic performances careful, detailed attention. For

some closer examination of such matters, see Burton Raffel, "Who Heard the Rhymes and How: Shakespeare's Dramaturgical Signals," *Oral Tradition* 11 (October 1996): 190–221, and Raffel, "Metrical Dramaturgy in Shakespeare's Earlier Plays," *CEA Critic* 57 (Spring–Summer 1995): 51–65.

The Merchant of Venice



CHARACTERS (DRAMATIS PERSONAE)

The Duke of Venice

The Prince of Morocco (Portia's suitor)

The Prince of Arragon (Portia's suitor)

Antonio (a merchant of Venice)

Bassanio (Antonio's friend, Portia's suitor)

Solanio, Salarino, Gratiano (friends of Antonio and Bassanio)

Lorenzo (in love with Jessica)

Shylock (a rich Jew)

Tubal (Shylock's friend)

Lancelot Gobbo (a clown, Shylock's servant)

Old Gobbo (Lancelot's father)

Leonardo (Bassanio's servant)

Salerio (Venetian court attendant)

Balthasar, Stephano (Portia's servants)

Portia (an heiress)

Nerissa (Portia's personal attendant)

Jessica (Shylock's daughter)

Venetian Nobles, Officers of the Court of Justice, Jailer, Servants, and Attendants

Act I



SCENE I

Venice, a street

ENTER ANTONIO, SALARINO, AND SOLANIO

Antonio In sooth¹ I know not why I am so sad,
It wearies me, you say it wearies you.
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff² 'tis made of, whereof it is borne,³
I am to⁴ learn. And such a want-wit⁵ sadness makes of me, 5
That I have much ado⁶ to know myself.
Salarino Your mind is tossing on the ocean,⁷
There where your argosies⁸ with portly⁹ sail

1 truth

2 material

3 whereof it is borne=from where it has been carried

4 am to = still have to

5 witless/senseless/brainless person

6 labor, work

7 OHseeAHN

8 large merchant vessels*

9 stately, magnificent

- Like signiors¹⁰ and rich burghers¹¹ on the flood,¹²
 10 Or as it were¹³ the pageants¹⁴ of the sea,
 Do overpeer¹⁵ the petty traffickers¹⁶
 That curtsy¹⁷ to them, do them reverence,¹⁸
 As they¹⁹ fly by them²⁰ with their woven wings.²¹
Solanio Believe me sir, had I such venture forth,²²
 15 The better²³ part of my affections²⁴ would
 Be with my hopes²⁵ abroad. I should be still²⁶
 Plucking the grass²⁷ to know where sits²⁸ the wind,
 Peering in maps²⁹ for ports, and piers, and roads.³⁰
 And every object³¹ that might make me fear
 20 Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt³²

10 the Signoria: hereditary noblemen who ruled Venice

11 i.e., northern European (Dutch or German) citizen-merchants

12 water

13 as it were = as one might say

14 decorated barges, festival street floats ("stage- or tapestry-scene")

15 look down on

16 petty traffickers = small/insignificant trader ships

17 deep bow, with one knee bent (then used for both men and women)

18 deference, respect

19 the argosies

20 the smaller ships

21 woven wings = winglike sails

22 venture forth = risky/hazardous business★ under way

23 larger

24 emotions

25 wishes, expectations (i.e., the risks were great, but the profits would be much greater)

26 always

27 in order to toss it into the air (literally, to throw it to the winds)

28 where sits = from which direction blows

29 charts, maps

30 ports, and piers, and roads = harbors, and landing/unloading places, and sheltered places/roadsteads/anchorages near the shore

31 obstacle, hindrance

32 out of doubt = beyond a doubt ("certainly")★

Would make me sad.

Salarino My wind³³ cooling my broth

Would blow me to an ague,³⁴ when³⁵ I thought

What harm a wind too great might do at sea.

I should not see the sandy hourglass³⁶ run

But I should think of shallows,³⁷ and of flats,³⁸

And see my wealthy “Andrew”³⁹ docks⁴⁰ in sand,

Vailing⁴¹ her high top lower than her ribs⁴²

To kiss her burial.⁴³ Should I go to church

And see the holy edifice⁴⁴ of stone,

And not bethink me straight⁴⁵ of dangerous rocks,

Which touching but my gentle⁴⁶ vessel's side

Would scatter all her spices on the stream,⁴⁷

Enrobe⁴⁸ the roaring waters with my silks,

And (in a word) but even now⁴⁹ worth this,

And now worth nothing. Shall I have the thought

To think on this, and shall I lack the thought

33 own breath

34 fever (EYgyoo)

35 when, if

36 sand-filled hourglasses were common; clocks were not

37 shallow-depth water

38 shoals (land just below the water's surface, and hard to see)

39 ship name

40 as she docks/is docked

4I lowering, bowing down

42 a ship's curved frame-timbers

43 kiss her burial = kiss/touch (“kiss the ground”) her burial place/tomb

44 building

45 directly, at once*

46 noble★

47 water

48 dress, adorn

49 even now = recently, just now*

That such a thing bechanced⁵⁰ would make me sad?

But tell not me,⁵¹ I know Antonio

Is sad to think upon⁵² his merchandise.

40 *Antonio* Believe me no, I thank my fortune⁵³ for it,

My ventures are not in one bottom⁵⁴ trusted,

Nor to one place, nor is my whole estate⁵⁵

Upon⁵⁶ the fortune of this present year.

Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

Solanio Why then you are in love.

45 *Antonio* Fie,⁵⁷ fie.

Solanio Not in love neither. Then let us say you are sad

Because you are not merry, and 'twere as easy

For you to laugh and leap, and say you are merry

Because you are not sad. Now by two-headed Janus,⁵⁸

50 Nature hath framed⁵⁹ strange fellows in her time.

Some that will evermore peep⁶⁰ through their eyes,

And laugh like parrots at a bagpiper.⁶¹

And other⁶² of such vinegar aspect,⁶³

50 happening

51 tell not me = don't tell me

52 about, of

53 luck★

54 ship

55 condition, standing, fortune★

56 resting on

57 for shame!

58 Roman god of entrances and exits, beginnings and endings

59 shaped, constructed ("made")

60 look with narrowed/half-shut eyes

61 i.e., bagpipe music is wailingly sad, but parrots laugh at it

62 others (Elizabethan grammar was often more relaxed than we are, today,
about issues of number, tense, and so on)

63 vinegar aspect = acid/sour face/look/appearance★

That they'll not show their teeth in⁶⁴ way of smile,
Though Nestor⁶⁵ swear the jest be laughable. 55

ENTER BASSANIO, LORENZO, AND GRATIANO

Solanio Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,
Gratiano, and Lorenzo. Fare ye well,
We leave you now with better company.⁶⁶
Salarino I would have stayed⁶⁷ till I had made you merry,
If worthier friends had not prevented⁶⁸ me. 60
Antonio Your worth is very dear⁶⁹ in my regard.
I take it your own business calls on you,
And you embrace th'occasion⁷⁰ to depart.
Salarino Good morrow my good lords.
Bassanio Good signiors both, when shall we laugh?⁷¹ Say when? 65
You grow exceeding strange.⁷² Must it be so?
Salarino We'll make our leisures⁷³ to attend⁷⁴ on yours.

EXEUNT⁷⁵ SALARINO AND SOLANIO

Lorenzo My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio
We two will leave you, but at dinnertime

64 by

65 even Nestor, wise old Greek, notorious for his utter seriousness

66 companionship, society★

67 waited

68 (1) excelled, surpassed, (2) precluded, forestalled ("stopped")

69 precious, valuable

70 embrace th'occasion = accept/take advantage of the circumstances★

71 have a good time together

72 distant, foreign

73 free time, opportunities

74 accompany, wait upon, answer to, follow★

75 they exit (Latin plural of "exit")★

70 I pray⁷⁶ you have in mind where we must⁷⁷ meet.

Bassanio I will not fail you.

Gratiano You look not well signior Antonio,

You have too much respect upon⁷⁸ the world:⁷⁹

They lose it⁸⁰ that do buy it with much care.⁸¹

75 Believe me you are marvelously⁸² changed.

Antonio I hold⁸³ the world but as the world Gratiano,

A stage, where every man must play a part,

And mine a sad one.

Gratiano Let me⁸⁴ play the fool,

With mirth and laughter let old⁸⁵ wrinkles come,

80 And let my liver⁸⁶ rather heat with wine,

Than my heart cool with mortifying⁸⁷ groans.

Why should a man whose blood is warm within

Sit like his grandsire, cut in alabaster?⁸⁸

Sleep when he wakes?⁸⁹ And creep⁹⁰ into the jaundice⁹¹

85 By being peevish?⁹² I tell thee what Antonio,

76 ask, request

77 (1) are certain to, or (2) are supposed to

78 respect upon = concern for

79 (1) fortune, (2) worldly affairs

80 "the world"

81 trouble, anxiety, attention

82 astonishingly, surprisingly

83 view, think of, consider

84 let me = I would rather ("allow me")

85 old age's

86 regarded, then, as the location of high emotions, including courage*

87 (1) austere, self-denying, (2) deadly, fatal

88 i.e., a mortuary/funereal monument/statue

89 is awake

90 proceed cautiously/abjectly

91 deadly disease of the liver

92 morose, irritable

I love⁹³ thee, and it is my love that speaks.
 There are a sort of men, whose visages
 Do cream and mantle⁹⁴ like a standing⁹⁵ pond,
 And do a willful stillness⁹⁶ entertain,
 With purpose to be drest⁹⁷ in an opinion⁹⁸ 90
 Of wisdom, gravity,⁹⁹ profound conceit,¹⁰⁰
 As who should¹⁰¹ say, I am sir an oracle,
 And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark.
 O my Antonio, I do know of these
 That therefore only are reputed wise 95
 For saying¹⁰² nothing, when I am very sure
 If they should speak would almost damn those ears
 Which, hearing them, would call their¹⁰³ brothers fools.
 I'll tell thee more of this another time.
 But fish not with this melancholy bait 100
 For this fool gudgeon,¹⁰⁴ this opinion.
 Come good Lorenzo, fare ye well a while,
 I'll end my exhortation¹⁰⁵ after dinner.
Lorenzo Well, we will leave you then till dinnertime.
 I must be one of these same dumb wise men, 105

93 have genuine affection for*

94 cream and mantle = curdle and froth

95 stagnant

96 willful stillness = maintain/observe an obstinate/perverse refusal to speak

97 clothed

98 reputation

99 solemnity, authority

100 understanding, conception*

101 as who should = as if to

102 for saying = because they say

103 their own

104 small freshwater fish used as bait

105 earnest speech, urging moral behavior/thought

For Gratiano never lets me speak.

Gratiano Well, keep me company but two years mo,¹⁰⁶

Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

Antonio Fare you well, I'll grow a talker¹⁰⁷ for this gear.¹⁰⁸

110 *Gratiano* Thanks i'faith,¹⁰⁹ for silence is only commendable¹¹⁰

In a neat's¹¹¹ tongue dried,¹¹² and a maid¹¹³ not vendible¹¹⁴

EXEUNT GRATIANO AND LORENZO

Antonio It is that anything, now.¹¹⁵

Bassanio Gratiano speaks an infinite deal¹¹⁶ of nothing, more

115 than any man in all Venice. His reasons¹¹⁷ are two grains of
wheat hid in two bushels of chaff.¹¹⁸ You shall¹¹⁹ seek all day
ere¹²⁰ you find them, and when you have them they are not
worth the search.

Antonio Well. Tell me now, what lady is the same

To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage¹²¹

120 That you today promised to tell me of?

Bassanio 'Tis not unknown to you Antonio

106 more, longer

107 grow a talker = become a conversationalist

108 for this gear = because of this (1) matter, (2) equipment ("these tools")

109 indeed*

110 proper, laudatory

111 ox, cow

112 i.e., a dried-up/withered old penis

113 virgin*

114 salable, marriageable

115 i.e., is what he just said anything at all?

116 amount, lot

117 views, arguments

118 husks left over after threshing

119 must

120 before*

121 sacred/holy journey

How much I have disabled mine estate,¹²²
 By something¹²³ showing a more swelling port¹²⁴
 Than my faint¹²⁵ means would grant continuance.¹²⁶
 Nor do I now make moan¹²⁷ to be abridged¹²⁸ 125
 From such a noble rate,¹²⁹ but my chief care
 Is to come fairly off¹³⁰ from the great debts
 Wherein my time¹³¹ something too prodigal¹³²
 Hath left me gaged.¹³³ To you Antonio
 I owe the most in money and in love, 130
 And from¹³⁴ your love I have a warranty¹³⁵
 To unburthen¹³⁶ all my plots¹³⁷ and purposes,
 How to get clear of all the debts I owe.
Antonio I pray you¹³⁸ good Bassanio let me know it,
 And if it stand as you yourself still¹³⁹ do, 135
 Within the eye¹⁴⁰ of honor, be assured

122 disabled mine estate = crippled/impaired my circumstances/fortune

123 to an extent

124 swelling port = inflated style of living

125 feeble

126 grant continuance = allow keeping on with

127 make moan = lament, complain

128 to be abridged = because I am reduced/curtailed

129 noble rate = great/magnificent quantity/size of expenditure

130 fairly off = (1) decently/properly, (2) fully away/out

131 wherein my time = in which my period/interval

132 something too prodigal = rather too extravagant*

133 pledged, mortgaged

134 because of

135 implied contract/guarantee (i.e., to Antonio, both as his warm friend and his largest creditor)

136 disclose

137 plans

138 I pray you = please

139 always? as yet? (the former more likely, but the latter not impossible)

140 recognition ("sight")

My purse, my person,¹⁴¹ my extremest¹⁴² means
Lie all unlocked¹⁴³ to your occasions.

Bassanio In my schooldays, when I had lost one shaft¹⁴⁴

140 I shot his fellow of¹⁴⁵ the selfsame flight
The selfsame way, with more advisèd watch,¹⁴⁶
To find the other forth,¹⁴⁷ and by adventuring¹⁴⁸ both,
I oft found both. I urge this childhood proof¹⁴⁹
Because what follows is pure innocence.

145 I owe you much, and like a willful youth
That which I owe¹⁵⁰ is lost, but if you please
To shoot another arrow that self¹⁵¹ way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt
As¹⁵² I will watch the aim, or¹⁵³ to find both,
150 Or bring your latter hazard¹⁵⁴ back again,
And thankfully rest¹⁵⁵ debtor for the first.

Antonio You know me well, and herein spend but¹⁵⁶ time
To wind¹⁵⁷ about my love with circumstance,¹⁵⁸

141 my person = I myself ("my body")

142 uttermost

143 open

144 arrow

145 fellow of = another arrow on

146 advisèd watch = careful/deliberate/determined observation

147 also

148 risking

149 evidence, process, demonstration

150 (1) owe? or (2) own?

151 same

152 that

153 either

154 venture, chance, risk★

155 remain

156 spend but = you just spend

157 wriggle, circle

158 details, circumlocution

And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
 In making question¹⁵⁹ of my uttermost¹⁶⁰ 155
 Than if you had made waste of all I have.
 Then do but say to me what I should¹⁶¹ do
 That in your knowledge may by me be done,
 And I am prest¹⁶² unto it. Therefore speak.
Bassanio In Belmont is a lady richly left,¹⁶³ 160
 And she is fair,¹⁶⁴ and fairer than that word,
 Of wondrous virtues.¹⁶⁵ Sometimes from her eyes
 I did receive fair speechless¹⁶⁶ messages.
 Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued¹⁶⁷
 To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia.¹⁶⁸ 165
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
 For the four winds blow in from every coast
 Renowned¹⁶⁹ suitors, and her sunny locks
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
 Which makes her seat of Belmont Cholchis' strond,¹⁷⁰ 170
 And many Jasons come in quest¹⁷¹ of her.

159 making question = questioning, doubting

160 my uttermost = how far I am willing to go ("the very most")★

161 (1) must, (2) ought to

162 (1) thrust, urged, compelled, (2) enlisted

163 endowed by inheritance (i.e., as one "leaves" property by a will and testament)

164 beautiful★

165 qualities, conduct, moral excellence

166 wordless, silent

167 inferior

168 wife of Brutus, one of Caesar's assassins, and a woman of intense moral power

169 celebrated, honorable, of high reputation

170 makes her seat of Belmont Cholchis' strond = transforms her residence / country estate of Belmont into the shores of Colchis (where Jason had sought the Golden Fleece)

171 search, pursuit

O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival¹⁷² place with one of them,
I have a mind presages¹⁷³ me such thrift¹⁷⁴

175 That I should questionless¹⁷⁵ be fortunate.

Antonio Thou knowst that all my fortunes are at sea,

Neither have I money, nor commodity¹⁷⁶

To raise a present¹⁷⁷ sum. Therefore go¹⁷⁸ forth,

Try¹⁷⁹ what my credit can in Venice do,

180 That shall be racked¹⁸⁰ even to the uttermost

To furnish¹⁸¹ thee to Belmont to¹⁸² fair Portia.

Go presently inquire, and so will I,

Where money is, and I no question make¹⁸³

To have it of my trust,¹⁸⁴ or for my sake.¹⁸⁵

EXEUNT

172 competitive

173 a mind presages = a judgment/opinion that portends/predicts*

174 success, prosperity*

175 undoubtedly, without question

176 goods, property

177 immediate ("readily accessible")*

178 I will go

179 to see/test/find out*

180 stretched, strained

181 supply, provide for*

182 and to

183 no question make = have no doubt

184 of my trust = on my credit

185 for my sake = because of personal regard/considerations

SCENE 2

Belmont, Portia's residence

ENTER PORTIA WITH NERISSA, HER PERSONAL ATTENDANT

Portia By my troth¹ Nerissa, my little² body is aweary of this great world.

Nerissa You would be sweet³ madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are. And yet for ought I see, they⁴ are as sick that surfeit⁵ with too much, as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness therefore to be seated⁶ in the mean.⁷ Superfluity⁸ comes sooner by white hair,⁹ but competency¹⁰ lives longer.

Portia Good sentences,¹¹ and well pronounced.¹²

Nerissa They would be better if well followed.

Portia If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels¹³ had been¹⁴ churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine¹⁵ that follows his own instructions.¹⁶ I can easier teach twenty what were good to

1 by my troth = in faith ("truly")

2 (1) short, (2) small

3 fine, feeling genial/agreeable

4 those

5 that surfeit = who feed to excess*

6 located, fixed

7 middle

8 excess, overabundance

9 comes sooner by white hair = brings white hair (aging) sooner

10 sufficiency, enough

11 opinions, wisdom ("sententia")

12 proclaimed, delivered

13 small private rooms for worship, not consecrated as churches

14 had been = would be

15 clergyman

16 teaching

- 15 be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own
teaching. The brain may devise¹⁷ laws for the blood,¹⁸
but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree.¹⁹ Such a hare is
madness,²⁰ the youth, to skip²¹ o'er the meshes²² of good
counsel,²³ the cripple.²⁴ But this reason²⁵ is not in fashion
20 to choose me a husband. O me, the word "choose." I may
neither choose whom I would, nor refuse whom I dislike, so
is the will²⁶ of a living daughter curbed²⁷ by the will²⁸ of a
dead father. Is it not hard,²⁹ Nerissa, that I cannot choose
one, nor refuse none?
- 25 *Nerissa* Your father was ever³⁰ virtuous, and holy men at their
death have good inspirations.³¹ Therefore the lottery³² that
he hath devised in these three chests³³ of gold, silver, and
lead, whereof who chooses his meaning,³⁴ chooses³⁵ you,

17 contrive, arrange, invent, think out

18 emotions, passions

19 law, rule, order, judgment

20 folly

21 to skip = who leaps/hops

22 nets (i.e., as used to trap hares)

23 advice, direction

24 i.e., someone who cannot "skip"

25 logic, rationale, basis

26 wish, desire

27 controlled, restrained*

28 last will and testament

29 troublesome, fatiguing, difficult*

30 always*

31 good inspirations = exalted ideas

32 method of choosing/winning a prize by making a choice of other things

33 treasure chests/boxes (later referred to as "caskets")

34 whereof who chooses his meaning = from/by means of which whoever
chooses your father's meaning

35 i.e., will be enabled to marry

will no doubt ne'er³⁶ be chosen by any rightly but³⁷ one
 who you shall rightly³⁸ love. But what warmth is there in 30
 your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are
 already come?

Portia I pray thee overname³⁹ them, and as thou namest them,
 I will describe them, and according to my description level
 at⁴⁰ my affection. 35

Nerissa First there is the Neapolitan prince.

Portia Ay that's a colt⁴¹ indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of
 his horse, and he makes it a great appropriation⁴² to his own
 good parts⁴³ that he can shoe him⁴⁴ himself. I am much
 afraid my lady his mother played false with a smith.⁴⁵ 40

Nerissa Then is there the County Palantine.⁴⁶

Portia He doth nothing but frown, as who should say,⁴⁷ and⁴⁸
 you will not have me, choose.⁴⁹ He hears merry tales and
 smiles not. I fear he will prove the weeping⁵⁰ philosopher
 when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly⁵¹ sadness in 45

36 never★

37 by any rightly but = correctly by anyone except

38 properly, truly, justly

39 name one after the other

40 level at = (1) focus on/take aim at, (2) balance out

41 awkward young person, young ass

42 special attribute

43 qualities, characteristics, talents★

44 the horse

45 played false with a smith = committed adultery with a blacksmith

46 County Palantine = royal count

47 as who should say = as if to say

48 if

49 choose someone else

50 melancholy (derived from misanthropic Heraclitus, Greek philosopher, ca.
 540–480 B.C.E.)

51 rude, discourteous

his youth. I had rather to be married to a death's head⁵² with
a bone in his mouth, then to either of these. God defend⁵³
me from these two.

Nerissa How say you by⁵⁴ the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

50 *Portia* God made him,⁵⁵ and therefore let him pass for a man.
In truth I know it is a sin to be a mocker, but he, why he hath
a horse better than the Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of
frowning than the Count Palantine, he is every man in no
man.⁵⁶ If a thrush⁵⁷ sing, he falls straight a-capering,⁵⁸ he
55 will fence with his own shadow. If I should marry him, I
should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise⁵⁹ me, I
would forgive him,⁶⁰ for if he love me to⁶¹ madness, I should
never requite⁶² him.

Nerissa What say you then to Falconbridge, the young baron of
60 England?⁶³

Portia You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not
me, nor I him. He hath⁶⁴ neither Latin, French, nor Italian,
and you will come into the court⁶⁵ and swear that I have a

52 death's head = skull (commonly used as a memento mori, a reminder of the inevitability of death)

53 protect

54 how say you by = what do you say/think of/about/concerning

55 i.e., he was born: God was understood to create everything

56 i.e., he tries to be everything/everyone, and succeeds in being nothing/no one

57 thrush

58 gay dancing/leaping

59 scorn, disregard ("go away")

60 forgive him = give him up

61 even to

62 return his love

63 baron of England = English baron

64 speaks/understands

65 court of law, in which one is sworn to tell the truth

poor pennyworth in the English.⁶⁶ He is a proper⁶⁷ man's
 picture,⁶⁸ but alas, who can converse with a dumb show?⁶⁹ 65
 How oddly he is suited.⁷⁰ I think he bought his doublet⁷¹ in
 Italy, his round hose⁷² in France, his bonnet⁷³ in Germany,
 and his behavior everywhere.

Nerissa What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbor?

Portia That he hath a neighborly charity in him, for he 70
 borrowed⁷⁴ a box of the ear of⁷⁵ the Englishman, and swore
 he would pay him again when he was able. I think the
 Frenchman became his surety,⁷⁶ and sealed⁷⁷ under⁷⁸ for
 another.

Nerissa How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's 75
 nephew?

Portia Very vilely⁷⁹ in the morning when he is sober, and most
 vilely in the afternoon when he is drunk. When he is best, he
 is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little

66 poor pennyworth in the English = a mere scrap of English

67 normal, real, actual

68 likeness

69 dumb show = theatrical representation* without speech

70 dressed

71 jacketlike body garment, with or without sleeves

72 round hose = breeches-like garment, covering the legs, and padded to
 round it out

73 head, cap (all men wore hats/caps)

74 took, received

75 box of the ear of = blow on the head from

76 (1) guarantor, security, (2) protector, safeguard*

77 ratified (by signing and affixing a seal)*

78 i.e., a guarantor would sign underneath the signature of the primary debtor
 – perhaps meaning, here, that the Frenchman also received a blow on the
 head from the Englishman

79 awful, disgusting*

80 better than a beast. And the worst fall⁸⁰ that ever fell,⁸¹ I hope
I shall make shift⁸² to go without him.

Nerissa If he should offer to choose, and choose the right
casket,⁸³ you should refuse to perform⁸⁴ your father's will, if
you should refuse to accept him.

85 *Portia* Therefore for fear of the worst, I pray thee set a deep⁸⁵
glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary⁸⁶ casket, for if the
devil⁸⁷ be within,⁸⁸ and that temptation without,⁸⁹ I know
he will choose it. I will do anything Nerissa, ere I will be
married to a sponge.⁹⁰

90 *Nerissa* You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords.
They have acquainted me with⁹¹ their determinations,⁹²
which is indeed to return to their home and to trouble you
with no more suit,⁹³ unless you may be won by some other
sort⁹⁴ than your father's imposition,⁹⁵ depending on⁹⁶ the
95 caskets.

Portia If I live to be as old as Sibylla,⁹⁷ I will die as chaste as

80 (1) happening, occurrence, ★ (2) calamity

81 happens

82 make shift = find a way

83 chest ★

84 execute, carry out

85 full, large

86 wrong

87 devil

88 inside

89 outside

90 drunk (i.e., someone who soaks up alcohol)

91 acquainted me with = informed me of

92 decisions

93 pursuit, attendance, petitioning, supplication ★

94 choice, luck, fortune

95 charge, order, command

96 depending on = contingent upon, conditioned by

97 the most famous Sibyl (oracle, prophetess), at Cumae, was said to have lived a
thousand years

Diana,⁹⁸ unless I be obtained⁹⁹ by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable,¹⁰⁰ for there is not one among them but I dote on¹⁰¹ his very¹⁰² absence, and I wish them a fair departure. 100

Nerissa Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier that came hither in company of the Marquis of Mountferrat?

Portia Yes, yes, it was Bassanio, as I think so was he called.

Nerissa True madam, he of all the men that ever my foolish eyes 105 looked upon, was the best deserving¹⁰³ a fair lady.

Portia I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

ENTER A SERVANT

Servant The four strangers seek you madam to take their leave. And there is a fore-runner¹⁰⁴ come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the Prince his master will be here tonight. 110

Portia If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach. If he have the condition¹⁰⁵ of a saint, and the complexion¹⁰⁶ of a divel, I had rather he should shrive me¹⁰⁷ 115

98 moon goddess and protector of women

99 won★

100 rational, sensible

101 dote on = am infatuated with

102 true, actual, complete★

103 deserving of

104 herald

105 mode/state of being, moral nature

106 nature, character

107 shrive me = hear my confession (the precise meaning is uncertain)

ACT I • SCENE 2

than wive me. Come Nerissa. Sirrah¹⁰⁸ go before.¹⁰⁹ Whiles
we shut the gate upon one wooer, another knocks at the
door.

EXEUNT

108 term used in addressing males of low standing, or boys*

109 ahead of us

SCENE 3

Venice, a public place

ENTER BASSANIO WITH SHYLOCK

Shylock Three thousand ducats,¹ well.²

Bassanio Ay sir, for three months.

Shylock For three months, well.

Bassanio For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.³

Shylock Antonio shall become bound, well.

5

Bassanio May you stead⁴ me? Will you pleasure⁵ me? Shall I
know your answer?

Shylock Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio
bound.

Bassanio Your answer to that?

10

Shylock Antonio is a good man.

Bassanio Have you heard any imputation⁶ to the contrary?

Shylock Ho no, no, no, no. My meaning in saying he is a good
man, is to have you understand me that he is sufficient,⁷ yet
his means are in supposition.⁸ He hath an argosy bound to
Tripolis,⁹ another to the Indies, I understand moreover
(upon¹⁰ the Rialto)¹¹ he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for

15

1 gold coins★ (there was then no paper money)

2 fine? so?

3 contractually responsible

4 help, serve

5 gratify

6 accusation, charge

7 of adequate means/wealth

8 in supposition = uncertain, at risk

9 (1) in Lebanon, or (2) in Libya

10 from ("as heard upon")

11 Venetian mercantile exchange

England, and other ventures he hath squandered¹² abroad.
 But ships are but boards, sailors but men, there be land rats,
 20 and water rats, water thieves, and land thieves – I mean
 pirates.¹³ And then there is the peril of waters, winds, and
 rocks. The man is notwithstanding¹⁴ sufficient. Three
 thousand ducats. I think I may take his bond.¹⁵

Bassanio Be assured you may.

25 *Shylock* I will be assured I may, and that¹⁶ I may be assured,
 I will bethink me.¹⁷ May I speak with Antonio?

Bassanio If it please you to dine with us.

Shylock Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation¹⁸ which
 your prophet the Nazarite¹⁹ conjured the divel into.²⁰ I will
 30 buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and
 so following.²¹ But I will not eat with you, drink with you,
 nor pray with you. (*looking*) What news on the Rialto, who is
 he comes here?

ENTER ANTONIO

Bassanio This is signior Antonio.

35 *Shylock* (*aside*) How like a fawning publican²² he looks.

12 scattered

13 robbers

14 in spite of all that, nevertheless

15 contract/agreement of obligation/debt*

16 in order/how that

17 bethink me = consider

18 dwelling place (i.e., the place where pigs “dwell,” the pigsty)

19 Jesus of Nazareth

20 Matt. 8:28–33

21 so following = so on, etc.

22 fawning publican = flattering/cringing inn-keeper (“publican” also means, biblically, “tax-gatherer,” as in Luke 18:10; there is no reason to think Shylock so intends)

I hate him for²³ he is a Christian.
 But more, for that in low simplicity²⁴
 He lends out money gratis,²⁵ and brings down
 The rate of usance²⁶ here with us²⁷ in Venice.
 If I can catch him once upon the hip,²⁸ 40
 I will feed fat²⁹ the ancient grudge³⁰ I bear him.
 He hates our sacred nation,³¹ and he rails³²
 Even there where merchants most do congregate
 On me, my bargains,³³ and my well-won thrift,
 Which he calls “interest.” Cursèd be my tribe³⁴ 45
 If I forgive him.

Bassanio Shylock, do you hear?

Shylock I am debating of³⁵ my present store,
 And by the near³⁶ guess of my memory
 I cannot instantly raise up³⁷ the gross³⁸
 Of full three thousand ducats. What of that? 50

23 because

24 low simplicity = base ignorance

25 free of interest/charge

26 rate of usance = current interest rate (also then known as “usury”)*

27 with us = (1) in Venetian moneylending? (2) in the Jewish community?

28 catch him . . . upon the hip = get him . . . at a disadvantage (a wrestling term)

29 fully, substantially, plentifully

30 ill-will (unless Shakespeare knew the long history of Christian persecution of Jews, which seems unlikely, this “ill-will” refers to communal hostility)

31 i.e., the Jews as God’s chosen people (1Chron. 16:18)

32 speaks abusively

33 (1) bargaining, (2) contracts*

34 the Jewish people: the tribe of Israel

35 debating of = considering

36 closest

37 raise up = raise

38 whole

Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,³⁹
 Will furnish me. But soft,⁴⁰ how many months
 Do you desire? (*to Antonio*) Rest you fair,⁴¹ good signior,
 Your worship⁴² was the last man in our mouths.⁴³

55 *Antonio* Shylock, albeit⁴⁴ I neither lend nor borrow
 By taking nor by giving of excess,⁴⁵
 Yet to supply the ripe⁴⁶ wants of my friend
 I'll break a custom. (*to Bassanio*) Is he yet possessed⁴⁷
 How much ye would?

Shylock Ay, three thousand ducats.

60 *Antonio* And for three months.

Shylock I had forgot, three months. (*to Bassanio*) You told me so.
 (*to Antonio*) Well then, your bond. And let me see – but hear
 you,
 Methoughts⁴⁸ you said you neither lend nor borrow
 Upon advantage.⁴⁹

Antonio I do never use⁵⁰ it.

65 *Shylock* When Jacob grazed⁵¹ his uncle Laban's sheep,⁵²

39 (?) one of the twelve tribes of Israel (which makes no great sense; it seems an indication of how little Shakespeare knew about Jews)

40 not so fast*

41 rest you fair = be at ease

42 an honorific, in polite usage

43 in our mouths = of whom we spoke

44 although (allBEit)

45 extra, interest

46 urgent (i.e., that which is ripe must be harvested without delay; debts coming due must be paid; needs that have arisen must be met)

47 aware, have knowledge of

48 it seemed to me

49 upon advantage = for gain* (interest)

50 do, engage in, practice*

51 tended, shepherded

52 (see Gen. 27)

This Jacob from our holy Abram⁵³ was
 (As his wise mother wrought⁵⁴ in his behalf)
 The third possessor.⁵⁵ Ay, he was the third.
Antonio And what of him, did he take interest?
Shylock No, not take interest, not as you would say 70
 Directly⁵⁶ interest. Mark⁵⁷ what Jacob did,
 When Laban and himself were compromised⁵⁸
 That all the eanlings⁵⁹ which were streaked and pied⁶⁰
 Should fall⁶¹ as Jacob's hire.⁶² The ewes being rank,⁶³
 In end of autumn turned to the rams, 75
 And when the work of generation⁶⁴ was
 Between these woolly breeders⁶⁵ in the act,⁶⁶
 The skillful shepherd pilled me⁶⁷ certain wands,⁶⁸
 And in the doing of the deed of kind⁶⁹
 He stuck them up before⁷⁰ the fulsome⁷¹ ewes, 80
 Who then conceiving, did in eaning time

53 Abraham

54 worked, arranged

55 i.e., (1) Abraham, (2) Isaac, (3) Jacob

56 straightforwardly, exactly

57 notice, observe*

58 were compromised = had agreed, come to terms, settled

59 young lambs

60 streaked and pied = striped and part-colored

61 be allotted/apportioned

62 wages, payment

63 in heat

64 procreation, propagation

65 propagators, procreators

66 in the act = being performed/done

67 pilled me = stripped, debarked (me: reflexive of no lexical significance)

68 sticks

69 deed of kind = act of procreation, the natural act ("sex")

70 in front of

71 (1) plump, fat, (2) lustful

Fall⁷² parti-colored lambs,⁷³ and those were Jacob's.
 This was a way to thrive,⁷⁴ and he was blest.
 And thrift is blessing if men steal it not.

85 *Antonio* This was a venture sir, that Jacob served for,⁷⁵
 A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
 But swayed and fashioned⁷⁶ by the hand of heaven.
 Was this inserted⁷⁷ to make interest good?
 Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

90 *Shylock* I cannot tell, I make it breed as fast,
 But note me⁷⁸ signior.

Antonio Mark you this, Bassanio,
 The divel can cite Scripture for his purpose.⁷⁹
 An evil soul producing holy witness⁸⁰
 Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,

95 A goodly⁸¹ apple rotten at the heart.
 O what a goodly outside falsehood hath.

Shylock Three thousand ducats, 'tis a good round sum.
 Three months from twelve, then⁸² let me see the rate.

Antonio Well Shylock, shall we be beholding⁸³ to you?

100 *Shylock* Signior Antonio, many a time and oft

72 drop, give birth to

73 i.e., whatever the mother (of any species) saw at the time of conception was thought to physically impress itself on her offspring

74 prosper, flourish, be successful*

75 served for = deserved, was worthy of, earned

76 swayed and fashioned = caused/ruled/governed* and shaped

77 introduced, mentioned

78 note me = pay attention to me/what I say

79 the DIVel CAN cite SCRIPture FOR his PURpose

80 evidence, testimony, knowledge

81 good-looking

82 now

83 indebted, under obligation

In the Rialto you have rated⁸⁴ me
 About my monies⁸⁵ and my usances.
 Still⁸⁶ have I borne⁸⁷ it with a patient shrug
 (For sufferance⁸⁸ is the badge⁸⁹ of all our tribe).
 You call me misbeliever,⁹⁰ cutthroat⁹¹ dog, 105
 And spit upon my Jewish gabardin,⁹²
 And all for use of that which is mine own.
 Well then, it now appears you need my help.
 Go to⁹³ then, you come to me, and you say
 Shylock, we would⁹⁴ have monies, you say so. 110
 You that did void⁹⁵ your rheum⁹⁶ upon my beard,
 And foot⁹⁷ me as you spurn⁹⁸ a stranger cur⁹⁹
 Over¹⁰⁰ your threshold, monies is your suit.
 What should I say to you? Should I not say,
 Hath a dog money? Is it possible 115
 A cur should lend three thousand ducats? Or

84 scolded, reproved

85 plural of "money" (most often used today in legal documents)

86 always, yet

87 endured

88 patient endurance, long-suffering

89 emblem, sign (Jews were often required to wear badges identifying them as Jews)

90 heretic, infidel

91 murderous

92 loose upper garment of coarse cloth

93 go to = come on

94 wish to

95 empty, discharge

96 mucous ("spit")

97 kick

98 kick at/away

99 worthless/low-bred dog

100 out across

Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key¹⁰¹
 With bated¹⁰² breath, and whispering humbleness,
 Say this: Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last,
 120 You spurned me such a day, another time
 You called me dog, and for these courtesies
 I'll lend you thus much monies?

Antonio I am as like to call thee so again,
 To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
 125 If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
 As to thy friends, for when did friendship take
 A breed for barren metal¹⁰³ of¹⁰⁴ his friend?
 But lend it rather to thine enemy,
 Who if he break¹⁰⁵ thou mayst with better face
 Exact¹⁰⁶ the penalty.

130 *Shylock* Why look you how you storm,¹⁰⁷
 I would be friends with you, and have your love,
 Forget the shames that you have stained¹⁰⁸ me with,
 Supply your present wants, and take no doit¹⁰⁹
 Of usance for my monies, and you'll not hear¹¹⁰ me,
 135 This is kind¹¹¹ I offer.

101 bondman's key = serf's/slave's manner/voice/tone

102 lessened, subdued*

103 a breed for barren metal = a living thing in place of sterile (not living)
 metal (gold, silver, etc.)

104 from

105 (1) not fulfill his contractual obligation, (2) be fiscally ruined/bankrupted

106 demand, enforce*

107 rage, complain

108 i.e., to a significant degree literally stained

109 very small Dutch coin (DOYT)

110 listen to

111 (1) kindness, (2) a natural thing/process

Bassanio This were¹¹² kindness.

Shylock This kindness will I show.

Go with me to a notary,¹¹³ seal me there

Your single bond,¹¹⁴ and in a merry sport¹¹⁵

If you repay me not on such a day,

In such a place, such sum or sums as are

140

Expressed¹¹⁶ in the condition,¹¹⁷ let the forfeit¹¹⁸

Be nominated¹¹⁹ for an equal¹²⁰ pound

Of your fair flesh,¹²¹ to be cut off and taken

In what part of your body it pleaseth me.

Antonio Content in faith, I'll seal to such a bond,

145

And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

Bassanio You shall¹²² not seal to such a bond for me,

I'll rather dwell¹²³ in my necessity.

Antonio Why fear not man, I will not forfeit it.

Within these two months, that's a month before

150

This bond expires, I do expect return¹²⁴

Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

Shylock O father Abram, what these Christians are,

112 would be

113 then more like a "solicitor" (non-court-appearing lawyer)

114 single bond = a contract without additional guarantors

115 jest, entertainment

116 set forth

117 stipulations, contractual terms

118 penalty for breach of contract

119 designated

120 exact, precise

121 Shapiro suggests that "flesh" here means "penis" (*Shakespeare and the Jews*, 121-122)

122 must

123 stay, remain

124 profits, cargoes

- Whose own hard¹²⁵ dealings teaches them suspect¹²⁶
 155 The thoughts of others. Pray you tell me this,
 If he should break his day, what should I gain
 By the exaction of the forfeiture?
 A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
 Is not so estimable,¹²⁷ profitable neither¹²⁸
 160 As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats.¹²⁹ I say
 To buy his favor I extend this friendship.
 If he will take it, so. If not adieu,
 And for¹³⁰ my love I pray you wrong me not.
Antonio Yes Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.
 165 *Shylock* Then meet me forthwith at the notary's,
 Give¹³¹ him direction¹³² for this merry bond,
 And¹³³ I will go and purse¹³⁴ the ducats straight,
 See to my house (left in the fearful¹³⁵ guard
 Of an unthrifty knave),¹³⁶ and presently
 170 I'll be with you.

EXIT SHYLOCK

Antonio Hie¹³⁷ thee, gentle Jew. This Hebrew will turn

125 callous, unfeeling

126 to be suspicious of

127 valuable

128 profitable neither = not as profitable as

129 muttons, beefs, or goats = sheep, cow, or goat carcasses

130 because of

131 to give

132 instructions

133 and then

134 collect

135 terrible, awful

136 unthrifty knave = wasteful/careless rascal*

137 hurry*

Christian, he grows kind.

Bassanio I like not fair terms, and a villain's mind.

Antonio Come on, in this there can be no dismay,¹³⁸

My ships come home a month before the day.

175

EXEUNT

138 danger, difficulty

Act 2



SCENE I

Belmont, Portia's house

TRUMPET FLOURISH¹

ENTER MOROCCO, A TAWNY MOOR ALL IN WHITE,
AND THREE OR FOUR FOLLOWERS, WITH PORTIA, NERISSA,
AND THEIR TRAIN

Morocco Mislike² me not for my complexion,³
The⁴ shadowed livery⁵ of the burnished⁶ sun,
To whom I am a neighbor, and near bred.⁷
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
5 Where Phoebus'⁸ fire scarce thaws the icicles,
And let us make incision for⁹ your love,
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.

1 fanfare*

2 dislike

3 comPLEXeeOWN

4 which is the

5 shadowed livery = dark uniform

6 bright

7 near bred = closely related (i.e., to the sun as a god)

8 sun god

9 incision for = incisions/cuts through the skin on account of

I tell thee lady this aspect of mine
 Hath feared¹⁰ the valiant (by my love I swear).
 The best regarded¹¹ virgins of our clime¹² 10
 Have loved it too. I would not change this hue,
 Except to steal¹³ your thoughts,¹⁴ my gentle queen.
Portia In terms of choice¹⁵ I am not solely led
 By nice direction¹⁶ of a maiden's eyes.
 Besides, the lottery of my destiny 15
 Bars¹⁷ me the right of voluntary choosing.
 But if my father had not scanted¹⁸ me,
 And hedged¹⁹ me by his wit²⁰ to yield²¹ myself
 His²² wife, who²³ wins me by that means I told you,
 Yourself (renowned prince) then stood as fair²⁴ 20
 As any comer²⁵ I have looked on yet
 For my affection.
Morocco Even for that I thank you.
 Therefore I pray you lead me to the caskets
 To try my fortune. By this scimitar²⁶

10 frightened

11 respected, considered

12 climate, region

13 gain access to, take possession

14 attention, regard

15 in terms of choice = as far as choice is concerned

16 nice direction = the strict/particular/critical disposition/guidance

17 prevents

18 restricted, limited

19 bound, confined

20 ingenuity, wisdom*

21 yield myself = give myself as

22 as his

23 he who

24 stood as fair = had as good a chance, occupied as favorable a position

25 visitor, arrival

26 curved, single-edged sword

25 That slew the Sophy,²⁷ and a Persian Prince
 That won three fields of²⁸ Sultan Solyman,²⁹
 I would oe'r-stare³⁰ the sternest³¹ eyes that look,³²
 Outbrave³³ the heart most³⁴ daring on the earth,
 Pluck³⁵ the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
 30 Yea, mock³⁶ the lion when he roars for prey,
 To³⁷ win thee, lady. But alas, the while
 If Hercules and Lichas³⁸ play at dice
 Which³⁹ is the better man, the greater throw
 May turn⁴⁰ by fortune from⁴¹ the weaker hand.
 35 So is Alcides⁴² beaten by his rage,
 And so may I, blind fortune⁴³ leading me,
 Miss that⁴⁴ which one unworthier may attain,
 And die with⁴⁵ grieving.
Portia You must take your chance,

27 Shah of Persia

28 fields of = battles from

29 Turkish sultan, 1520–1566

30 outstare

31 harshest, grimmest

32 see

33 surpass, defy, outdo

34 which is most

35 snatch/drag/tear away

36 defy

37 in order to

38 Hercules' servant (LIEkas), thrown into the sea by his master after,
 unwittingly, Lichas brings him the poisoned shirt that kills him

39 to determine which

40 be spun/cast/thrown

41 by fortune from = by accident/luck away from

42 Greek name for Heracles (alSEEdeez)

43 i.e., luck, *not* the goddess Fortune, who was not portrayed as blind

44 miss that = fail to attain Portia

45 from/because of

And either not attempt to choose at all,
 Or swear before you choose, if⁴⁶ you choose wrong 40
 Never to speak to lady⁴⁷ afterward
 In⁴⁸ way of marriage. Therefore be advised.⁴⁹
Morocco Nor will not.⁵⁰ Come, bring me unto my chance.
Portia First forward⁵¹ to the temple.⁵² After dinner
 Your hazard shall be made.
Morocco Good fortune then, 45
 To make me blessed – or cursed'st among men.⁵³

CORNETS⁵⁴

EXEUNT

46 that if

47 any lady

48 by

49 warned, cautioned

50 nor will not = nor will I ever speak to another lady about marriage

51 first forward = first

52 church

53 to MAKE me BLESSED or CURsedst Among MEN

54 fanfare

SCENE 2

Venice, a street

ENTER LANCELOT GOBBO

Gobbo Certainly, my conscience will serve¹ me to run from²
 this Jew my master. The fiend³ is at mine elbow, and tempts
 me, saying to me, “Gobbo, Lancelot Gobbo, good Lancelot,”
 or “good Gobbo,” or “good Lancelot Gobbo, use your legs,
 5 take the start,⁴ run away.” My conscience says, “No, take heed
 honest⁵ Lancelot, take heed honest Gobbo,” or as aforesaid
 “honest Lancelot Gobbo, do not run, scorn running⁶ with
 thy heels.” Well, the most courageous fiend bids⁷ me pack.⁸
 “Fia,”⁹ says the fiend, “away,” says the fiend, “for the heavens¹⁰
 10 rouse¹¹ up a brave mind,” says the fiend, “and run.” Well, my
 conscience hanging about the neck of my heart, says very
 wisely to me, “My honest friend Lancelot, being an honest
 man’s son,” or rather an honest woman’s son, for indeed my
 father did something smack,¹² something grow too,¹³ he had
 15 a kind of taste.¹⁴ Well, my conscience says, “Lancelot budge¹⁵

1 (1) encourage, (2) permit

2 run from = abandon

3 Satan

4 i.e., get going

5 honorable, respectable, decent, proper★

6 such running

7 urges, orders, asks★

8 pack up, leave

9 get going (“via”: VIEah)

10 for the heavens = for heaven’s sake

11 raise, lift

12 savor (sexual)

13 i.e., his penis

14 a try, a savoring, etc. (sexual)

15 stir, move

not. "Budge," says the fiend." Budge not," says my conscience."
 "Conscience," say I, "You counsel well," "Fiend," say I, "You
 counsel well." To be ruled¹⁶ by my conscience, I should stay
 with the Jew my master, who (God bless the mark)¹⁷ is a kind
 of divel. And to run away from the Jew I should be ruled by 20
 the fiend, who saving your reverence¹⁸ is the divel himself.
 Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation,¹⁹ and in²⁰ my
 conscience, my conscience is a kind of hard conscience, to
 offer²¹ to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the
 more friendly counsel. I will run, fiend, my heels are at your 25
 commandment, I will run.

ENTER OLD GOBBO WITH A BASKET

Old Gobbo Master²² young man, you I pray you, which is the
 way²³ to Master Jew's?

Gobbo (*aside*) O heavens, this is my true-begotten²⁴ father,
 who being more than sand-blind²⁵ – high-gravel-blind²⁶ – 30
 knows me not, I will try confusions with²⁷ him.

Old Gobbo Master young gentleman, I pray you which is the
 way to Master Jew's?

16 guided, governed, directed*

17 a more or less apologetic exclamation

18 saving your reverence = with all due respect (more or less apologetic)

19 incarnated ("made flesh")

20 to, in all

21 suggest, propose

22 mister

23 path, road*

24 i.e., "clown" English: Lancelot was truly begotten (engendered) by Old
 Gobbo, not vice versa

25 half-blind, dim-sighted

26 seriously stone-blind

27 confusions with = confusing

- Gobbo Turn upon your right hand²⁸ at the next turning,
 35 but at the next turning of all on²⁹ your left. Marry,³⁰ at
 the very next turning, turn of no hand,³¹ but turn down
 indirectly³² to the Jew's house.
- Old Gobbo Be God's sonties,³³ 'twill be a hard way to hit.³⁴
 Can you tell me whether one Lancelot that dwells with him
 40 dwell³⁵ with him or no?
- Gobbo Talk you of young Master Lancelot? (*aside*) Mark
 me³⁶ now, now will I raise the waters.³⁷ (*to Old Gobbo*) Talk
 you of young Master Lancelot?
- Old Gobbo No master sir, but a poor man's son, his father
 45 (though I say't) is an honest, exceeding poor man, and God
 be thanked well to live.³⁸
- Gobbo Well, let his father be what 'a³⁹ will, we talk of
 young Master Lancelot.
- Old Gobbo Your worship's⁴⁰ friend and⁴¹ Lancelot, sir.
- 50 Gobbo But I pray you ergo⁴² old man, ergo I beseech you,
 talk you of young Master Lancelot.

28 upon your right hand = to the right

29 to

30 a conventional exclamation (originally an evocation of Mary, mother of Christ)*

31 turn of no hand = don't turn at all

32 obliquely, slantwise, diagonally

33 be God's sonties = by God's saints (*santé*, in French)

34 reach

35 still lives

36 mark me = watch

37 old Gobbo's tears

38 well to live = prosperous, well-to-do

39 he

40 worship = honorific term of address for those of high standing

41 and his name is

42 therefore (Latin)

Old Gobbo Of Lancelot, ant⁴³ please your mastership.

Gobbo Ergo Master Lancelot, talk not of Master Lancelot,
 father,⁴⁴ for the young gentleman according to fates and
 destinies, and such odd⁴⁵ sayings, the sisters three,⁴⁶ and such 55
 branches⁴⁷ of learning, is indeed⁴⁸ deceased, or as you would
 say in plain terms,⁴⁹ gone to heaven.

Old Gobbo Marry God forbid, the boy was the very staff of my
 age, my very prop.⁵⁰

Gobbo Do I look like a cudgel⁵¹ or a hovel-post,⁵² a staff or 60
 a prop? Do you know me, father?

Old Gobbo Alack⁵³ the day, I know you not, young gentleman,
 but I pray you tell me, is my boy – God rest his soul – alive or
 dead?

Gobbo Do you not know me, father? 65

Old Gobbo Alack sir, I am sand-blind, I know you not.

Gobbo Nay, indeed if you had your eyes you might⁵⁴ fail of
 the knowing me. It is a wise father that knows his own child.
 Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son, give me your
 blessing, (*kneeling*) truth will come to light, murder cannot be 70
 hid long, a man's son may,⁵⁵ but in the end truth will out.

43 and it, may it

44 old man

45 an indefinite number of

46 sisters three = the three Fates

47 divisions

48 in fact

49 words★

50 support (as in "support beam")

51 short, thick stick ("club")

52 shed-post

53 alas

54 might still

55 be hidden

Old Gobbo Pray you sir stand up, I am sure you are not Lancelot my boy.

Gobbo Pray you let's have no more fooling about it, but give
75 me your blessing. I am Lancelot your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be.

Old Gobbo I cannot think you are my son.

Gobbo I know not what I shall⁵⁶ think of that. But I am
80 Lancelot the Jew's man, and I am sure Margery your wife is my mother.

Old Gobbo Her name is Margery indeed, I'll be sworn if thou
be Lancelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood. Lord
worshipped might he be! (*touching the back of Gobbo's head*)
What a beard hast thou got, thou hast got more hair on thy
85 chin than Dobbin my fill-horse⁵⁷ has on his tail.

Gobbo It should⁵⁸ seem then that Dobbin's tail grows
backward. I am sure he had more hair of⁵⁹ his tail than I
have⁶⁰ of my face when I last saw him.

Old Gobbo Lord how art thou changed. How dost thou and thy
90 master agree?⁶¹ I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now?

Gobbo Well, well, but for mine own part, as I have set up my
rest⁶² to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some⁶³

56 ought to, must

57 shaft-horse (i.e., the rear horse in a team, the one put into the shafts/long bars attached to the harness and to the wagon)

58 would, must

59 on

60 had

61 get along

62 set up my rest = determined to venture my last stake/reserve (as in gambling)

63 a certain (indefinite) amount of

ground. My master's a very Jew, give him a present, give him a
 halter,⁶⁴ I am famished in his service. You may tell⁶⁵ every 95
 finger I have with my ribs.⁶⁶ Father, I am glad you are come,
 give me⁶⁷ your present to one Master Bassanio, who indeed
 gives rare new liveries.⁶⁸ If I serve not him, I will run as far as
 God has any ground.⁶⁹ O rare fortune, here comes the man.
 To⁷⁰ him father, for I am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer. 100

ENTER BASSANIO WITH AN ATTENDANT OR TWO

Bassanio (to Attendants) You may do so, but let it be so hasted⁷¹
 that supper be ready at the farthest by five of the clock. See
 these letters delivered, put the liveries to making, and desire
 Gratiano to come anon⁷² to my lodging.

Gobbo To him father. 105

Old Gobbo God bless your worship.

Bassanio Gramercy.⁷³ Would'st⁷⁴ thou aught⁷⁵ with me?

Old Gobbo Here's my son sir, a poor boy –

Gobbo Not a poor boy sir, but the rich Jew's man that
 would, sir, as my father shall specify.⁷⁶ 110

64 hangman's noose

65 recognize, perceive, distinguish

66 clown language for "every rib I have with your fingers"

67 give me = give on my behalf/for me

68 rare new liveries = exceptional/fine new servants' uniforms★

69 i.e., as far as the world goes/extends

70 go to/at

71 so hasted = done so quickly

72 at once★

73 thank you

74 do you wish/want

75 anything, something

76 speak of in detail

Old Gobbo He hath a great infection⁷⁷ sir, as one would say, to serve –

Gobbo Indeed the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and have a desire as my father shall specify.

115 *Old Gobbo* His master and he (saving your worship's reverence) are scarce cater-cousins⁷⁸ –

Gobbo To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, having done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father being I hope an old man shall frutify⁷⁹ unto you –

120 *Old Gobbo* I have here a dish of doves⁸⁰ that I would bestow upon⁸¹ your worship, and my suit is –

Gobbo In very brief, the suit is impertinent⁸² to myself, as your worship shall know by this honest old man, and though I say it, though old man, yet poor man, my father.

125 *Bassanio* One⁸³ speak for both. What would you?

Gobbo Serve you sir.

Old Gobbo That is the very defect⁸⁴ of the matter sir.

Bassanio I know thee well, thou hast obtained thy suit.

Shylock thy master spoke with me this day,

130 And hath preferred⁸⁵ thee (if it be preferment⁸⁶

To leave a rich Jew's service) to become

77 affection (“desire”) (uneducated man’s error)

78 good/intimate friends

79 notify (uneducated man’s error)

80 of doves = made of/from doves/pigeons

81 bestow upon = give/present★ to

82 pertinent (“relevant”) (uneducated man’s error)

83 let one of you

84 effect (“purpose, intent”) (uneducated man’s error)

85 recommended

86 a promotion

- The follower of so poor a gentleman.⁸⁷
- Gobbo* The old proverb⁸⁸ is very well parted⁸⁹ between my master Shylock and you sir. You have the “grace of God,” sir, and he hath “enough.” 135
- Bassanio* Thou speakst it well. (*to Old Gobbo*) Go, father, with thy son.
 (*to Gobbo*) Take leave of thy old⁹⁰ master, and inquire My lodging out. (*to Attendants*) Give him a livery More guarded⁹¹ than his fellows’. See it done.
- Gobbo* Father, in. I cannot get a service,⁹² no, I have ne’er a 140
 tongue in my head.⁹³ Well. (*pretending to read his own palm*) If any man in Italy have a fairer table⁹⁴ which doth offer⁹⁵ to swear upon a book!⁹⁶ I shall have good fortune. Go to, here’s a simple⁹⁷ line of life,⁹⁸ here’s a small trifle⁹⁹ of wives. Alas, fifteen wives is nothing, eleven widows and nine maids is a 145
 simple coming in¹⁰⁰ for one man. And then to ’scape drowning thrice, and to be in peril of my life with¹⁰¹ the edge of a featherbed.¹⁰² Here are simple ’scapes. Well, if

87 i.e., so poor a gentleman as myself

88 “the grace of God is gear [property] enough”

89 divided

90 former

91 ornamented

92 job as a domestic servant

93 (?) quoting from his father’s strictures, when Gobbo was younger

94 palm

95 present itself

96 i.e., oaths were (and still are) taken with one hand on the Bible

97 straightforward

98 line of life = life-determining line in the palm

99 insignificant total

100 simple coming in = humble beginning

101 from

102 soft bed, stuffed with feathers (or down) (edge = the sharp/cutting edge of

150 Fortune¹⁰³ be a woman, she's a good wench¹⁰⁴ for this
gear.¹⁰⁵ Father come, I'll take my leave of the Jew in the¹⁰⁶
twinkling.

EXIT GOBBO AND OLD GOBBO

Bassanio I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on¹⁰⁷ this.
These things being bought and orderly bestowed,¹⁰⁸
Return in haste, for I do feast¹⁰⁹ tonight
155 My best esteemed¹¹⁰ acquaintance. Hie thee, go.
Leonardo My best endeavors¹¹¹ shall be done herein.¹¹²

ENTER GRATIANO

Gratiano Where's your master?
Leonardo Yonder sir, he walks.

EXIT LEONARDO

Gratiano Signior Bassanio.
Bassanio Gratiano.
Gratiano I have a suit to you.
160 *Bassanio* You have obtained it.

a blade: the sense seems to be that getting into bed with a woman –
marrying her – is as dangerous as being attacked with a knife)

103 the goddess*

104 lively young woman

105 (?) clothing, dress

106 a

107 think on = apply yourself to

108 orderly bestowed = properly (1) used, (2) placed

109 (verb) entertain sumptuously

110 valued, respected

111 efforts

112 in this matter

Gratiano You must not deny¹¹³ me, I must go with you to Belmont.

Bassanio Why then you must. But hear thee Gratiano,
 Thou art too wild,¹¹⁴ too rude,¹¹⁵ and bold¹¹⁶ of voice,
 Parts that become¹¹⁷ thee happily¹¹⁸ enough,
 And in such eyes as ours appear not faults, 165
 But where they are not known, why there they show¹¹⁹
 Something too liberal.¹²⁰ Pray thee take pain¹²¹
 To allay¹²² with some cold drops of modesty¹²³
 Thy skipping¹²⁴ spirit, lest through thy wild behavior
 I be misconsterd¹²⁵ in the place I go to, 170
 And lose my hopes.

Gratiano Signor Bassanio, hear me.
 If I do not put on a sober habit,¹²⁶
 Talk with respect, and swear but¹²⁷ now and then,
 Wear¹²⁸ prayerbooks in my pocket, look demurely,¹²⁹

113 refuse, say no to*

114 uncultured, unrestrained

115 unskilled, barbarous

116 presumptuous

117 suit, are fitting for*

118 successfully, satisfactorily, aptly

119 look, are viewed as

120 something too liberal = somewhat/rather too free/unrestrained*

121 take pain = make an effort*

122 repress, calm

123 self-control, moderation

124 leaping, jumping

125 misconstrued (missCONstered)

126 sober habit = moderate/solemn/serious/sedate* behavior and/or clothing*

127 only

128 carry

129 modestly, gravely, quietly

- 175 Nay more, while grace is saying,¹³⁰ hood¹³¹ mine eyes
 Thus with my hat, and sigh and say “amen,”
 Use all the observance of civility¹³²
 Like one well studied in a sad ostent¹³³
 To please his grandam, never trust me more.
- 180 *Bassanio* Well, we shall see your bearing.¹³⁴
Gratiano Nay, but I bar¹³⁵ tonight, you shall not gage¹³⁶ me
 By what we do tonight.
- Bassanio* No, that were pity.¹³⁷
 I would entreat you rather to put on
 Your boldest suit¹³⁸ of mirth, for we have friends
 185 That purpose¹³⁹ merriment. But fare you well,
 I have some business.
- Gratiano* And I must to Lorenzo and the rest.
 But we will visit you at supper time.

EXEUNT

130 being said

131 cover (with his hat's brim)

132 good behavior (“citizenship”)

133 showing, display (Latin *ostentatio*)★

134 behavior

135 but I bar = unless I (1) stop myself, (2) behave myself (a pun: “bear” and “bar” were quasi-homophonic)

136 shall not gage = must not judge

137 that were pity = that would be a pity

138 (1) clothing, (2), condition, state (i.e., Bassanio answers Gratiano's pun with a pun of his own)

139 intend

SCENE 3

Shylock's house

ENTER JESSICA AND GOBBO

Jessica I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so.

Our house is hell, and thou a merry divel

Did'st rob it of some taste¹ of tediousness.²

But fare thee well, there is a ducat for thee.

And Lancelot, soon at supper shalt thou see

5

Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest.

Give him this letter, do it secretly.

And so farewell: I would not have my father

See me in talk with thee.

Gobbo Adieu, tears exhibit³ my tongue. Most beautiful pagan,

10

most sweet Jew, if a Christian do not play the knave and get

thee, I am much deceived. But adieu, these foolish drops do

somewhat drown my manly spirit. Adieu.

EXIT GOBBO

Jessica Farewell good Lancelot.

Alack, what heinous⁴ sin is it in me

15

To be ashamed to be my father's child?

But though I am a daughter to his blood,

I am not⁵ to his manners.⁶ O Lorenzo,

If thou keep promise I shall end this strife,

Become a Christian, and thy loving wife.

20

EXIT

1 sense, flavor

2 weariness, exhaustion, boredom*

3 inhibit (uneducated man's error)

4 atrocious, infamous, hateful (HAYnes)

5 not a daughter

6 way of life, behavior, morals

SCENE 4

Venice, a street

ENTER GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALARINO, AND SOLANIO

Lorenzo Nay, we will slink¹ away in supper time,
Disguise us at my lodging, and return
All in an hour.

Gratiano We have not made good preparation.²

5 *Salarino* We have not spoke³ us yet of torchbearers.

Solanio 'Tis vile unless it may be quaintly⁴ ordered,
And better in my mind not undertook.

Lorenzo 'Tis now but four of clock, we have two hours
To furnish us.

ENTER GOBBO WITH LETTER

Friend Lancelot. What's the news?

10 *Gobbo* And it shall please you to break up⁵ this, shall it⁶ seem
to signify.⁷

Lorenzo I know the hand,⁸ in faith 'tis a fair hand,
And whiter than the paper it writ on
Is the fair hand that writ.

Gratiano Love news, in faith.

15 *Gobbo* By your leave sir.⁹

1 slip, steal

2 PREperAseeOWN

3 (1) spoken, discussed, (2) requested, engaged

4 cleverly, skillfully

5 break up = break the seal on ("open")

6 shall it = it shall/will

7 i.e., inform you of the news

8 handwriting

9 by your leave sir = with your permission* sir (I will leave)

Lorenzo Whither goest thou?

Gobbo Marry sir, to bid¹⁰ my old master the Jew to sup
tonight with my new master the Christian.

Lorenzo Hold here, take this. (*gives money*) Tell gentle Jessica

I will not fail her, speak it privately.

20

Go gentlemen,

Will you prepare you for this masque¹¹ tonight?

I am provided of¹² a torchbearer.

EXIT GOBBO

Salarino Ay marry, I'll be gone about it straight.

Solanio And so will I.

25

Lorenzo Meet me and Gratiano at Gratiano's lodging

Some¹³ hour hence.

Salarino 'Tis good we do so.

EXEUNT SALARINO AND SOLANIO

Gratiano Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

Lorenzo I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed¹⁴

30

How I shall¹⁵ take her from her father's house,

What gold and jewels she is furnished with,

What page's suit¹⁶ she hath in readiness.

If e'er¹⁷ the Jew her father come to heaven,

10 invite

11 entertainment (music, dancing, and miming) in which the performers wear masks

12 am provided of = have obtained

13 about an

14 written

15 must

16 page's suit = boy/youth's clothing

17 ever

- 35 It will be for his gentle daughter's sake.
 And never dare misfortune cross her foot,¹⁸
 Unless she¹⁹ do it under this excuse,
 That she²⁰ is issue²¹ to a faithless²² Jew.
 Come go with me, peruse this²³ as thou goest.
 40 Fair Jessica shall be my torchbearer.

EXEUNT

18 path ("where her foot walks")

19 it (Fortune, a goddess, is feminine; misfortune, though not a goddess, thereby acquires feminine gender)

20 Jessica

21 child

22 (1) unbelieving (in Christianity), (2) treacherous, untrustworthy

23 peruse this = examine/read her letter

SCENE 5

Venice, in front of Shylock's house

ENTER SHYLOCK AND GOBBO

Shylock Well, thou shall see (thy eyes shall be thy judge)

The difference of¹ old Shylock and Bassanio.

(*calling*) What Jessica! (*to Gobbo*) Thou shalt not gormandize²

As thou hast done with me. What Jessica?

And³ sleep, and snore, and rend⁴ apparel out.

5

Why Jessica, I say!

Gobbo Why Jessica!

Shylock Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

Gobbo Your worship was wont⁵ to tell me I could do nothing
without bidding.⁶

10

ENTER JESSICA

Jessica Call you? What is your will?⁷

Shylock I am bid forth to supper, Jessica,

There are my keys. But wherefore⁸ should I go?

I am not bid for love, they flatter me.

But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon⁹

15

The prodigal¹⁰ Christian. Jessica my girl,

1 between

2 eat like a glutton

3 and all you ever do is

4 wear out ("tear apart")

5 accustomed

6 i.e., I couldn't/wouldn't do anything unless I was told to do it

7 what is your will = what is it you wish/want

8 why

9 by means/at the expense of

10 extravagant, wasteful

Look to¹¹ my house. I am right loath to go,
 There is some ill a-brewing¹² towards my rest,¹³
 For I did dream of money bags tonight.¹⁴

20 *Gobbo* I beseech you sir, go, my young master doth expect your
 reproach.¹⁵

Shylock So do I his.

Gobbo And they have conspired¹⁶ together. I will not say you
 shall see a masque, but if you do, then it was not for nothing
 25 that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black Monday¹⁷ last, at six
 o'clock i' the morning, falling out¹⁸ that year on Ash
 Wednesday was four year in th' afternoon.¹⁹

Shylock What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica,
 Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum
 30 And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,²⁰
 Clamber²¹ not you up to the casements²² then,
 Nor thrust your head into the public street
 To gaze on Christian fools with varnished²³ faces.
 But stop²⁴ my house's ears, I mean my casements,

11 look to = attend to, take care of*

12 in preparation

13 peace, tranquillity

14 last night

15 approach (reproach = disgrace/shame/censure) (uneducated man's error)

16 cooperated, planned

17 Black Monday = Easter Monday

18 falling out = coming on

19 Gobbo, a clown figure, is (1) making fun of astrological and other
 predictions, and (2) making no great sense

20 wry-necked fife = bent/contorted neck of the flute player (facing at a right
 angle to his instrument)

21 climb

22 window frames

23 painted*

24 close up, plug

- Let not the sound of shallow foppery²⁵ enter 35
 My sober house. By Jacob's staff²⁶ I swear,
 I have no mind²⁷ of feasting forth²⁸ tonight.
 But I will go. Go you before me sirrah,
 Say I will come.
- Gobbo* I will go before sir. 40
(aside to Jessica) Mistress, look out at window for all this.
 There will come a Christian by,²⁹
 Will be worth a Jewè's³⁰ eye.
- Shylock* What says that fool of Hagar's³¹ offspring, ha?
- Jessica* His words were "farewell mistress," nothing else. 45
- Shylock* The patch³² is kind enough, but a huge feeder,
 Snail-slow in profit,³³ and he sleeps by day
 More than the wildcat.³⁴ Drones hive not³⁵ with me,
 Therefore I part with him, and part with him
 To one that I would have him help to waste 50
 His borrowed purse.³⁶ Well, Jessica go in,
 Perhaps I will return immediately.
 Do as I bid you, shut doors after you.

25 shallow foppery = superficial folly/affectation

26 "With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands [companies, troops]" (Gen. 32:10)

27 desire, wish

28 away from home

29 nearby*

30 the spelling is from the Quarto; the accent mark is an editorial addition, to make clear that the word is meant to be pronounced with two syllables

31 Abraham's cast-out servant, mother of Ishmael (Gen. 21:9–21)

32 fool, clown, booby

33 benefit, gain

34 hunting at night, and sleeping all day

35 drones hive not = nonworkers (like drone bees) don't take shelter

36 funds

Fast bind,³⁷ fast find,³⁸

55 A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.

EXIT SHYLOCK

Jessica Farewell, and if my fortune be not crossed,³⁹

I have a father, you a daughter lost.

EXIT JESSICA

37 tie things up securely/tightly

38 surely find them when you want them

39 fortune be not crossed = luck is not blocked/thwarted

SCENE 6

Venice, in front of Shylock's house

ENTER GRATIANO AND SALARINO, AS MASQUERS

Gratiano This is the penthouse¹ under which Lorenzo
Desired us to make stand.²

Salarino His hour³ is almost past.

Gratiano And it is mervail⁴ he outdwells⁵ his hour,
For lovers ever run before⁶ the clock.

Salarino O ten times faster Venus' pigeons⁷ fly
To seal⁸ love's bonds new-made, than they are wont
To keep obligèd faith unforfeited.⁹

Gratiano That ever holds.¹⁰ Who riseth from a feast
With that keen appetite that he sits down?
Where is the horse that doth untread¹¹ again
His tedious measures¹² with the unbated¹³ fire
That he did pace them first? All things that are,
Are with more spirit chased¹⁴ than enjoyed.

5

10

1 porch, gallery

2 a pause/delay

3 appointed time

4 wonderful, marvelous

5 tarries beyond

6 ahead of

7 doves, who draw Venus' chariot

8 ratify, authenticate

9 keep obligèd faith unforfeited = preserve from violation faith that has
already been pledged

10 applies, is unbroken/observed

11 retrace

12 paces ("distance")s

13 unabated, unblunted

14 spirit chased = liveliness pursued/hunted

How like a younger¹⁵ or a prodigal
 15 The scarfed bark¹⁶ puts from her native bay,¹⁷
 Hugged and embracèd by the strumpet¹⁸ wind!¹⁹
 How like a prodigal doth she return
 With overweathered ribs and ragged sails,
 Lean, rent, and beggared²⁰ by the strumpet wind?²¹

ENTER LORENZO

20 *Salarino* Here comes Lorenzo, more of this hereafter.
Lorenzo Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode.²²
 Not I, but my affairs have made you wait.
 When you shall please to play the thieves for wives,
 I'll watch as long for you then. Approach.
 25 Here dwells my father²³ Jew. Hoa, who's within?

JESSICA ABOVE²⁴

Jessica Who are you? Tell me for more certainty,
 Albeit²⁵ I'll swear that I do know your tongue.²⁶
Lorenzo Lorenzo, and thy love.
Jessica Lorenzo certain, and my love indeed,²⁷
 30 For who love I so much? And now who knows

15 younger son

16 scarfed bark = banner-decorated ship

17 i.e., harbor

18 whorelike

19 then pronounced to rhyme with "bind, mind, find"

20 made destitute

21 lean RENT and BEGgared BY the STRUMpet WIND

22 delay

23 marriage (pledged or accomplished) turned in-laws into family members

24 on a theatrical "balcony"

25 although ("all be it")

26 voice

27 truly

But you Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

Lorenzo Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

Jessica Here, catch this casket, it is worth the pains.

I am glad 'tis night, you²⁸ do not look on me,

For I am much ashamed of my exchange.²⁹ 35

But love is blind, and lovers cannot see

The pretty³⁰ follies that themselves commit,

For if they could, Cupid³¹ himself would blush

To see me thus transformèd to a boy.

Lorenzo Descend, for you must be my torchbearer. 40

Jessica What, must I hold a candle to my shames?

They in themselves (goodsooth) are too too light.³²

Why, 'tis an office³³ of discovery, love,

And I should be obscured.³⁴

Lorenzo So are you sweet,

Even in the lovely garnish³⁵ of a boy. 45

But come at once,

For the close³⁶ night doth play the runaway,³⁷

And we are stayed for at Bassanio's feast.

Jessica I will make fast the doors and gild³⁸ myself

With some more ducats, and be with you straight. 50

EXIT JESSICA

28 and you

29 transmutation, alteration, substitution

30 fine (negative sense)

31 who was often pictured as blind

32 (1) bright, luminous, (2) frivolous

33 function, employment*

34 should be obscured = ought to be hidden

35 outfit, clothing

36 private, secluded, secret

37 deserter (i.e., it is rapidly leaving us)

38 make golden

Gratiano Now by my hood³⁹ a gentle,⁴⁰ and no Jew.

Lorenzo Beshrew me⁴¹ but I love her heartily.

For she is wise (if I can judge of her),

And fair she is (if that mine eyes be true),⁴²

55 And true she is (as she hath proved herself).

And therefore like herself (wise, fair, and true)

Shall she be placèd in my constant⁴³ soul.

ENTER JESSICA

What, art thou come? On gentleman,⁴⁴ away,

Our masquing mates⁴⁵ by this time for us stay.

EXEUNT LORENZO AND JESSICA

ENTER ANTONIO

60 *Antonio* Who's there?

Gratiano Signior Antonio?

Antonio Fie, fie, Gratiano, where are all the rest?

'Tis nine o'clock, our friends all stay for you,

No masque tonight, the wind is come about.⁴⁶

65 Bassanio presently will go aboard,

I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

Gratiano I am glad on't, I desire no more delight

Than to be under sail, and gone tonight.

EXEUNT

39 (?) manhood

40 (1) courteous, well-bred, honorable, (2) gentle

41 beshrew me = the devil take me*

42 trustworthy*

43 steadfast, faithful, true

44 spoken to and of Jessica

45 associates, comrades

46 is come about = has turned favorable

SCENE 7

Belmont, Portia's house

ENTER PORTIA AND MOROCCO, WITH THEIR ATTENDANTS

Portia (to Attendants) Go, draw¹ aside the curtains, and discover²

The several³ caskets to this noble prince.

(to Morocco) Now make your choice.

Morocco The first, of gold, who⁴ this inscription bears:

“Who chooseth me, shall gain what men desire.”

5

The second, silver, which this promise carries:

“Who chooseth me, shall get as much as he deserves.”

This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt:

“Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath.”

How shall I know if I do choose the right?

10

Portia The one of them contains my picture, Prince.

If you choose that, then I am yours withal.⁵

Morocco Some god direct my judgment. Let me see.

I will survey⁶ th' inscriptions, back again.⁷

What says this leaden casket?

15

“Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath.”

Must give, for what? For lead, hazard for lead?

This casket threatens men that hazard all⁸

1 pull★

2 disclose, show

3 different

4 which

5 as well as/in addition to the picture

6 examine, inspect

7 back again = once again, in reverse order

8 everything

Do it in hope of fair advantages.
 20 A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross.⁹
 I'll then nor¹⁰ give nor hazard aught for lead.
 What says the silver with her virgin¹¹ hue?
 "Who chooseth me, shall get as much as he deserves."
 As much as he deserves: pause there, Morocco,
 25 And weigh thy value with an even¹² hand.
 If thou be'st rated¹³ by thy estimation¹⁴
 Thou dost deserve enough, and yet enough
 May not extend so far as to the lady.
 And yet to be afear'd of my deserving
 30 Were but a weak disabling¹⁵ of myself.
 As much as I deserve: why that's the lady.
 I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,
 In graces,¹⁶ and in qualities of breeding.
 But more than these, in love I do deserve.
 35 What if I strayed¹⁷ no farther, but chose here?
 Let's see once more this saying graved¹⁸ in gold:
 "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire."
 Why that's the lady, all the world desires her.
 From the four corners of the earth they come

9 dregs, chaff, rubbish

10 neither

11 pure, white

12 steady, uniform

13 evaluated*

14 thy estimation = your own valuation/appraisal*

15 depriving, injuring

16 elegance, refinement*

17 wandered, roamed

18 carved, engraved

To kiss this shrine,¹⁹ this mortal breathing²⁰ saint. 40
 The Hyrcanian²¹ deserts, and the vast wilds²²
 Of wide Arabia are as throughfares, now,
 For princes to come view fair Portia.
 The watery kingdom,²³ whose ambitious head²⁴
 Spets²⁵ in the face of heaven, is no bar 45
 To stop the foreign spirits,²⁶ but they come
 As o'er a brook to see fair Portia.
 One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
 Is't like that lead contains her?²⁷ 'Twere damnation
 To think so base a thought, it were²⁸ too gross 50
 To rib²⁹ her cerecloth³⁰ in the obscure³¹ grave.
 Or shall I think in silver she's immured,³²
 Being³³ ten times undervalued to tried³⁴ gold?
 O sinful thought, never so rich a gem
 Was set in worse³⁵ than gold! They have in England 55

19 container for the relics of a saint (bones, etc.)

20 but still living/breathing

21 Persian

22 wastes, wilderness

23 watery kingdom = ocean, seas

24 ambitious head = swelling foam/froth

25 spits

26 men of spirit

27 i.e., her picture

28 it were = lead would be (though burial in lead caskets was then customary)

29 enclose

30 waxed winding-sheet for a corpse

31 dark

32 enclosed, shut up

33 being as she is

34 to tried = as compared to refined/purified

35 anything worse

A coin that bears the figure of an angel³⁶
 Stamped in gold, but that's insculped upon.³⁷
 But here an angel in a golden bed³⁸
 Lies all within.³⁹ Deliver me the key.

60 Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may.

Portia There, take it prince, and if my form⁴⁰ lie there
 Then I am yours.

Morocco O hell! What have we here,
 A carrion Death,⁴¹ within whose empty eye
 There is a written scroll.⁴² I'll read the writing.

65 All that glisters⁴³ is not gold,
 Often have you heard that told.
 Many a man his life hath sold
 But⁴⁴ my outside⁴⁵ to behold.
 Gilded timber do⁴⁶ worms infold.

70 Had you been as wise as bold,
 Young in⁴⁷ limbs, in judgment old,
 Your answer had not been inscrolled.⁴⁸

36 worth, at the time, roughly half an English pound
 37 that's insculped upon = that angel has been engraved (on the coin)
 38 i.e., Portia as an angel, here represented by her picture, "asleep" in a casket
 39 inside (the casket)
 40 image ("picture")
 41 carrion Death = a corpse's* skull (known as a "Death's head")
 42 paper on which there is writing (often rolled up)*
 43 gleams, sparkles, glitters
 44 only, just
 45 (?) the loveliness that used to be the skull's "outside," (2) the golden surface
 of the casket
 46 does
 47 in your
 48 written (i.e., it would have been Portia's picture)

Fare you well, your suit is cold.⁴⁹
 Cold indeed, and labor lost,
 Then farewell heat, and welcome frost.
 Portia adieu, I have too grieved a heart
 To take a tedious leave. Thus losers part.⁵⁰

75

EXIT MOROCCO

Portia A gentle riddance.⁵¹ Draw the curtains, go.
 Let all of his complexion⁵² choose me so.

EXEUNT

49 dead

50 depart

51 deliverance (removal, clearing out)

52 (?) (1) nature, temperament, (2) color

SCENE 8

Venice, a street

ENTER SALARINO AND SOLANIO

Salarino Why man I saw Bassanio under sail,

With him is Gratiano gone along.

And in their ship I am sure Lorenzo is not.

Solanio The villain Jew with outcries raised¹ the Duke,

5 Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.

Salarino He comes too late, the ship was under sail.

But there the Duke was given to understand

That in a gondola were seen together

Lorenzo and his amorous² Jessica.

10 Besides, Antonio certified³ the Duke

They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

Solanio I never heard a passion⁴ so confused,

So strange, outrageous,⁵ and so variable,

As the dog Jew did utter in the streets.⁶

15 "My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter,

Fled with a Christian, O my Christian ducats!

Justice – the law – my ducats – and my daughter!

A sealèd bag, two sealèd bags of ducats,

Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter,

20 And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,

Stol'n by my daughter. Justice, find the girl,

1 roused (it being night and the Duke in bed)

2 loving

3 assured

4 outburst

5 extravagant, excessive, extraordinary

6 AS the dog JEW did UTter IN the STREETS

- She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats.
Salarino Why all the boys in Venice follow him,
 Crying⁷ “his stones,⁸ his daughter, and his ducats.”
Solanio Let good Antonio look he keep his day⁹ 25
 Or he shall pay for this.
Salarino Marry, well remembr’d.
 I reasoned¹⁰ with a Frenchman yesterday,
 Who told me, in the narrow seas,¹¹ that part¹²
 The French and English, there miscarried¹³
 A vessel of our country richly fraught.¹⁴ 30
 I thought upon Antonio when he told me,
 And wished in silence that it were not his.
Solanio You were best to tell Antonio what you hear.
 Yet do not suddenly, for it may grieve him.
Salarino A kinder gentleman treads not the earth. 35
 I saw Bassanio and Antonio part.
 Bassanio told him he would make some speed
 Of his return. He answered, Do not so,
 Slubber¹⁵ not business for my sake, Bassanio,
 But stay the very riping¹⁶ of the time, 40

7 calling out

8 (1) jewels, (2) testicles

9 keep his day = meet his contractual day to repay the loan made him by Shylock

10 spoke

11 the narrow seas = the English Channel*

12 separate, divide

13 perished, was lost

14 loaded

15 sully, spoil, be careless about

16 ripening, maturation

And for¹⁷ the Jew's bond which he hath of¹⁸ me,
 Let it not enter in your mind of¹⁹ love.
 Be merry, and employ²⁰ your chiefest thoughts
 To courtship, and such fair ostents of love
 45 As shall conveniently become²¹ you there.
 And even²² there (his eye being big with tears),
 Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,²³
 And with affection wondrous sensible²⁴
 He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted.
 50 *Solanio* I think he only loves the world for him.²⁵
 I pray thee let us go and find him²⁶ out
 And quicken²⁷ his embracèd²⁸ heaviness
 With some delight or other.

Salarino

Do we so.

EXEUNT

17 as for

18 from

19 out/because of

20 use★

21 conveniently become = fittingly/appropriately/properly★ arise/come to

22 right

23 Bassanio (in a kind of affectionate gesture, half embrace)

24 (1) evident, perceptible, obvious, (2) large, considerable, (3) acutely felt, sensitive★

25 for him = because of Bassanio, on Bassanio's account

26 Antonio

27 revive, kindle, rouse up

28 gladly accepted/submitted to

SCENE 9

Belmont, Portia's house

ENTER NERISSA AND A SERVANT

Nerissa Quick, quick I pray thee, draw the curtain straight.
The Prince of Arragon hath ta'en his oath,
And comes to his election¹ presently.

ENTER ARRAGON AND HIS ATTENDANTS, AND PORTIA

Portia Behold, there stand the caskets, noble Prince.
If you choose that wherein I am contained, 5
Straight shall our nuptial rights be solemnized.
But if thou fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from hence immediately.

Arragon I am enjoined² by oath to observe three things:
First, never to unfold³ to any one 10
Which casket 'twas I chose; next, if I fail
Of the right casket, never in my life
To woo a maid in⁴ way of marriage;
Lastly, if I do fail in fortune⁵ of my choice,
Immediately to leave you, and be gone. 15

Portia To these injunctions⁶ everyone doth swear
That comes to hazard for my worthless self.

Arragon And so⁷ have I addressed⁸ me. Fortune now

1 act of choosing

2 commanded

3 disclose, reveal

4 by

5 the luck

6 commands

7 thus, in those terms

8 applied, directed

To my heart's hope! Gold, silver, and base lead.
 20 "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."
 You shall⁹ look fairer ere I give or hazard.
 What says the golden chest? Ha, let me see.
 "Who chooseth me, shall gain what many men desire."
 What many men desire: that "many" may be meant
 25 By¹⁰ the fool multitude that choose by show,
 Not learning more than the fond¹¹ eye doth teach,
 Which pries¹² not to th' interior, but like the martlet¹³
 Builds¹⁴ in the weather¹⁵ on the outward wall,
 Even in the force¹⁶ and road of casualty.¹⁷
 30 I will not choose what many men desire,
 Because I will not jump¹⁸ with common spirits,
 And rank¹⁹ me with the barbarous multitudes.
 Why then to thee, thou silver treasure house.
 Tell me once more what title²⁰ thou dost bear:
 35 "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves."
 And well said too, for who shall go about²¹
 To cozen²² fortune, and be honorable,

9 must

10 for

11 foolish, credulous

12 looks, searches, investigates

13 bird, also known as a "swift"

14 builds its nest

15 weather-vulnerable conditions

16 vigor, strength, power*

17 road of casualty = way of accident/disaster

18 (1) hop/leap about, (2) agree with

19 stand/classify with

20 inscription

21 go about = endeavor, bestir themselves

22 cheat, defraud

Without the stamp²³ of merit? Let none presume
 To wear an undeservèd dignity.²⁴
 O that estates,²⁵ degrees,²⁶ and offices, 40
 Were not derived corruptly, and that clear²⁷ honor
 Were purchased by the merit of the wearer.²⁸
 How many then should cover²⁹ that³⁰ stand bare?³¹
 How many be commanded that³² command?
 How much low pleasntry³³ would then be gleaned 45
 From³⁴ the true seed of honor? And how much honor
 Picked from the chaff and ruin³⁵ of the times,
 To be new varnished? Well, but to my choice.
 “Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.”
 I will assume desert.³⁶ Give me a key for this, 50
 And instantly unlock my fortunes here.
Portia Too long a pause for that which you find there.
Arragon What’s here? The portrait of a blinking³⁷ idiot
 Presenting me a schedule.³⁸ I will read it.

23 imprint, mark

24 worthiness

25 (1) privileges, positions, (2) means, prosperity

26 rank

27 bright, pure

28 i.e., honor(s) are “worn”

29 gain, make their way, succeed

30 who now

31 (1) stripped of (attainable/possible) prosperity, (2) bare-headed (like servants in the presence of masters)

32 who now

33 good humor, facetiousness

34 out of, away from

35 chaff and ruin = rubbish and decay

36 deserving, worth

37 weak-eyed

38 slip of paper

55 How much unlike art thou to Portia!
 How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!
 “Who chooseth me, shall have as much as he deserves.”

Did I deserve no more then a fool’s head?

Is that my prize, are my deserts no better?

60 *Portia* To offend and judge are distinct offices,
 And of opposèd³⁹ natures.⁴⁰

Arragon What is here? (*reading*)

The fier⁴¹ seven times tried⁴² this.

Seven times tried that judgment is

65 That did never choose amiss.

Some there be that shadows⁴³ kiss.⁴⁴

Such have but a shadow’s bliss.

There be fools alive, iwis,⁴⁵

Silver’d oe’r,⁴⁶ and so was this.

70 Take what wife you will to bed,

I⁴⁷ will ever be your head.⁴⁸

So be gone, you are sped.⁴⁹

Still more fool I shall appear

By⁵⁰ the time I linger⁵¹ here.

39 opposite, contrasting

40 i.e., he who offends is not in a position to judge what he has done

41 fire

42 refined, purified

43 unreal appearances, delusions

44 there are those who kiss creatures of their own imagining, rather than real people

45 surely, certainly

46 i.e., dressed up by the appearance of merit/worth

47 the “blinking idiot”

48 brain, intelligence

49 dismissed

50 because of

51 have lingered

With one fool's head I came to woo, 75
 But I go away with two.
 Sweet, adieu, I'll keep my oath,
 Patiently to bear my wrath.⁵²

EXIT ARRAGON

Portia Thus hath the candle singed the moth.
 O these deliberate⁵³ fools, when they do choose, 80
 They have the wisdom by their wit to lose.
Nerissa The ancient saying is no heresy:
 Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.
Portia Come draw the curtain, Nerissa.

ENTER MESSENGER

Messenger Where is my lady?
Portia Here. What would my lord?⁵⁴ 85
Messenger Madam, there is alighted at your gate
 A young Venetian, one that comes before⁵⁵
 To signify⁵⁶ th' approaching of his lord,
 From whom he bringeth sensible regrets⁵⁷ —
 To wit (besides commends⁵⁸ and courteous breath),⁵⁹ 90
 Gifts of rich value. Yet⁶⁰ I have not seen
 So likely an ambassador of love.
 A day in April never came so sweet

52 resentment, wrath
 53 careful and slow
 54 said in jest
 55 in advance
 56 indicate, announce★
 57 salutations, greetings
 58 compliments
 59 words
 60 before

To show how costly⁶¹ summer was at hand,
 95 As this fore-spurrer⁶² comes before his lord.
Portia No more, I pray thee. I am half afeared
 Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee,⁶³
 Thou spend'st such high-day⁶⁴ wit in praising him.
 Come, come Nerissa, for I long to see
 100 Quick Cupid's post,⁶⁵ that comes so mannerly.⁶⁶
Nerissa Bassanio, Lord Love, if thy will it be.⁶⁷

EXEUNT

61 sumptuous, extravagant

62 i.e., a "fore-runner" on horseback (using "spurs")

63 i.e., the messenger being less than a "gentleman," so too might the newcomer be

64 solemn festival

65 rapid messenger*

66 properly, courteously

67 let it be Bassanio, O Lord of Love, if you so choose

Act 3



SCENE I

Venice, a street

ENTER SOLANIO AND SALARINO

Solanio Now, what news on the Rialto?

Salarino Why yet it lives¹ there, unchecked,² that Antonio hath
a ship of rich lading wracked³ on the narrow seas – the
Goodwins,⁴ I think they call the place, a very dangerous flat,⁵
and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as
they say, if my gossip Report⁶ be an honest woman of her
word. 5

Solanio I would⁷ she were as lying a gossip, in that, as ever
knapped⁸ ginger, or made her neighbors believe she wept for

1 continues to be maintained

2 uncontradicted

3 lading wracked = cargo wrecked*

4 the Goodwin Sands, a shoal off the coast of Kent, England

5 shallows, shoals (very broad but having little visible surface)

6 gossip Report = friend/acquaintance Rumor

7 wish

8 nibbled, snapped off (ginger is a root)

10 the death of a third husband. But it is true, without any slips⁹
of prolixity, or crossing the plain¹⁰ highway of talk, that the
good Antonio, the honest Antonio – O that I had a title¹¹
good enough to keep his name company!

Salarino Come, the full stop.¹²

15 *Solanio* Ha, what sayest thou? Why the end is, he hath lost a
ship.

Salarino I would it might prove the end of his losses.

Solanio Let me say amen betimes,¹³ lest the divel cross¹⁴ my
prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.

ENTER SHYLOCK

20 How now Shylock, what news among the merchants?

Shylock You knew – none so well, none so well as you – of my
daughter's flight.

Salarino That's certain. I for my part knew the tailor¹⁵ that made
the wings she flew withal.¹⁶

25 *Solanio* And Shylock for his own part knew the bird¹⁷ was
fledged,¹⁸ and¹⁹ then it is the complexion²⁰ of them all to
leave the dam.²¹

9 errors, mistaken arguments/inferences

10 (1) direct, straight, simple, (2) manifest, obvious

11 name, rank

12 (1) all right, out with it/say it, get to the end (i.e., to the period in your sentence), (2) in horsemanship, suddenly bringing the animal to a stop

13 before it is too late, quickly

14 (1) erase, wipe out, (2) oppose, block

15 (not fanciful: Jessica disguised herself in boy's clothing)

16 flew withal = (1) fled with, (2) flew away on

17 then as now, referring to girls ("bird watching" = watching girls)

18 fully plumed (i.e., grown up)

19 and that

20 disposition, nature (rooted in physiology, as one of the body's "humors")

21 mother* (Is there a wife and mother currently in Shylock's house? We learn, in 3.1.103, that her name is or was Leah)

Shylock She is damned for it.

Salarino That's certain, if the divel may be her judge.

Shylock My own flesh and blood to rebel!²² 30

Solanio Out upon it,²³ old carrion.²⁴ Rebels it at these years?²⁵

Shylock I say²⁶ my daughter is my flesh and blood.

Salarino There is more difference between thy flesh and hers,
 than between jet and ivory,²⁷ more between your bloods than
 there is between red wine and Rhenish.²⁸ But tell us, do you 35
 hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

Shylock There I have another bad match,²⁹ a bankrout,³⁰ a
 prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto, a
 beggar that was used to come so smug upon the mart.³¹ Let
 him look to his bond (he was wont to call me usurer), let him 40
 look to his bond (he was wont to lend money for a Christian
 courtesy), let him look to his bond.

Salarino Why I am sure if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh.
 What's that good for?

Shylock To bait fish withal. If it will feed nothing else, it will 45
 feed my revenge.³² He hath disgraced³³ me, and hindered

22 defy lawful authority (a much stronger negative, in Shakespeare's time)

23 you don't mean it!

24 (N.B. the word can also refer to the fleshly nature of human beings)

25 rebels it at these years = does it [your penis] rise up at your age?

26 said

27 jet and ivory = black stone and white ivory (tusks)

28 Rhine wine (white) (these are either comparisons between young blood
 and old, or – literally – between their spirits/essential essences)

29 (1) agreement, bargain, (2) match up, alliance

30 bankrupt*

31 upon the mart = to the marketplace

32 (discussion of Jewish dietary laws, at this point, is irrelevant: no Western
 culture practices cannibalism)

33 degraded, dishonored

me³⁴ half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains,
 scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends,
 heated mine enemies, and what's the reason? I am a Jew. Hath
 50 not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions,³⁵
 senses, affections, passions, fed with the same food, hurt with
 the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the
 same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and
 summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If
 55 you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not
 die? And if you wrong us, shall³⁶ we not revenge? If we are
 like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew
 wrong a Christian, what is³⁷ his³⁸ humility? Revenge! If a
 Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance³⁹ be, by
 60 Christian example? Why, revenge! The villainy you teach me
 I will execute, and it shall go hard⁴⁰ but I will⁴¹ better the
 instruction.

ENTER A SERVANT FROM ANTONIO

Servant (to Salarino and Solanio) Gentlemen, my master Antonio
 is at his house, and desires to speak with you both.

65 *Salarino* We have been up and down to seek him.

ENTER TUBAL

34 hindered me = prevented/stopped me from making

35 measurements, size

36 must

37 is the nature of

38 the Christian's

39 forbearance, toleration

40 it shall go hard = you can count on the fact that

41 but I will = unless/if I do not

Solanio Here comes another of the tribe.⁴² A third cannot be matched,⁴³ unless the divel himself turn Jew.

EXEUNT SALARINO AND SOLANIO

Shylock How now Tubal, what news from Genoa? Hast thou found my daughter?

Tubal I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her. 70

Shylock (*gesturing*) Why there, there, there, there,⁴⁴ a diamond gone cost⁴⁵ me two thousand ducats in Frankfort.⁴⁶ The curse⁴⁷ never fell upon our nation⁴⁸ till now, I never felt it till now. Two thousand ducats in that, and other precious, 75
precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed⁴⁹ at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin. No news of them,⁵⁰ why so? And I know not how what's spent in the search! Why thou – loss upon loss, the thief gone with so much, and so 80
much to find the thief, and no satisfaction, no revenge, nor no ill luck stirring but what lights a⁵¹ my shoulders, no sighs but a⁵² my breathing, no tears but a⁵³ my shedding.

42 loosely used to mean Jews in general (perhaps derived from the 12 original tribes of Israel)

43 (?) found

44 (?) there they go?

45 which cost

46 i.e., at a fair, probably the annual jewelry fair, held in the fall

47 (?) possibly Christ's denunciation in Matt. 23:13–39

48 people

49 lying in a coffin

50 Lorenzo and Jessica

51 on

52 of

53 of

- Tubal* Yes, other men have ill luck too. Antonio as I heard in
85 *Genoa* –
Shylock What, what, what? Ill luck? Ill luck?
Tubal Hath⁵⁴ an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.
Shylock I thank God, I thank God? Is it true? is it true?
Tubal I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wrack.
90 *Shylock* I thank thee good *Tubal*, good news, good news. Ha, ha,
heard⁵⁵ in *Genoa*.
Tubal Your daughter spent in *Genoa*, as I heard, one night,
fourscore⁵⁶ ducats.
Shylock Thou stick'st a dagger in me, I shall never see my gold
95 again. Fourscore ducats at a sitting, fourscore ducats!
Tubal There came divers⁵⁷ of Antonio's creditors in my
company⁵⁸ to Venice, that swear he cannot choose but break.⁵⁹
Shylock I am very glad of it, I'll plague him, I'll torture him. I am
glad of it.
100 *Tubal* One of them showed me a ring that he had of⁶⁰ your
daughter for⁶¹ a monkey.
Shylock Out upon her, thou torturest me, *Tubal*. It was my
turquoise, I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not
have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.
105 *Tubal* But Antonio is certainly undone.

54 he hath

55 Quarto and Folio "here"; all editors emend, since Shylock is repeating *Tubal*, who said "I heard in *Genoa*"

56 fourscore = 80

57 various

58 in my company = along with me

59 go under/bankrupt

60 from

61 in exchange for

Shylock Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go Tubal, see me⁶² an officer,⁶³ bespeak him a fortnight before.⁶⁴ I will have the heart of him if he forfeit, for were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise⁶⁵ I will. Go Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue, go good Tubal! At our synagogue, Tubal.

110

EXEUNT

62 see me = see on my behalf

63 constable, sheriff's officer

64 bespeak him a fortnight before = engage him two weeks in advance

65 business

SCENE 2

Belmont, Portia's house

ENTER BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO,
AND THEIR ATTENDANTS

Portia I pray you tarry,¹ pause a day or two
Before you hazard, for in choosing wrong
I lose your company. Therefore forbear awhile,
There's something tells me (but it is not love)
5 I would not lose you, and you know yourself.
Hate counsels not in such a quality.²
But lest you should not understand me well
(And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought),
I would detain you here some month or two
10 Before you venture for me. I could teach you
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn,³
So⁴ will I never be, so⁵ may you miss me,
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
15 They have o'erlooked⁶ me and divided me,
One half of me is yours, the other half yours –
Mine own I would say, but⁷ if mine, then yours,
And so all yours. O these naughty⁸ times
Puts bars between the owners and their rights.

1 delay, wait*

2 (1) frame of mind, character, (2) ability, capacity*

3 breaking my oath

4 that

5 thus

6 bewitched

7 if

8 wayward, wicked*

- And so though yours, not yours (prove it so), 20
 Let Fortune go to hell for it, not I.
 I speak too long, but 'tis to peise⁹ the time,
 To etch it,¹⁰ and to draw it out in length,
 To stay you from election.
- Bassanio* Let me choose,
 For as I am, I live upon the rack.¹¹ 25
- Portia* Upon the rack, Bassanio, then confess
 What treason¹² there is mingled with your love.
- Bassanio* None but that ugly treason of mistrust,
 Which makes me fear¹³ th' enjoying of my love.
 There may as well be amity and life 30
 'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.
- Portia* Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
 Where men enforcèd¹⁴ doth speak anything.
- Bassanio* Promise me life, and I'll confess the truth.
- Portia* Well then, confess and live.
- Bassanio* Confess and love 35
 Had been the very sum¹⁵ of my confession.
 O happy torment, when my torturer
 Doth teach me answers for deliverance!¹⁶
 But let me to¹⁷ my fortune and the caskets.
- Portia* Away then. I am locked in one of them, 40

9 hold suspended/poised/balanced

10 etch it = eke it out

11 a torture instrument

12 breach of faith

13 uneasy/hesitant about

14 forced, compelled*

15 aggregate (total amount/quantity)

16 liberation, rescue

17 go to, seek

If you do love me, you will find me out.
 Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof.¹⁸
 Let music sound while he doth make his choice,
 Then if he lose he makes a swanlike end,¹⁹
 45 Fading in music. That the comparison
 May stand more proper,²⁰ my eye shall be the stream
 And watery deathbed for him. He may win,
 And what is music then? Then music is
 Even as the flourish, when true subjects bow
 50 To a new-crownèd monarch.²¹ Such it is,
 As are those dulcet²² sounds in²³ break of day,
 That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear,
 And summon him to marriage.²⁴ Now he goes
 With no less presence,²⁵ but with much more love
 55 Then young Alcides,²⁶ when he did redeem
 The virgin tribute²⁷ paid by howling²⁸ Troy
 To the sea monster.²⁹ I stand for³⁰ sacrifice,

18 at a distance

19 swans were thought to sing only when they were dying

20 applicable, natural

21 a husband is the lord of a marriage

22 sweet

23 at

24 music was played beneath a bridegroom's window, on the morning of his marriage

25 nobility, dignity

26 Hercules (alSEEdeez)

27 offering

28 wailing

29 The king of Troy, after having hired Poseidon, the sea god, to build Troy's walls, refused to pay him. Poseidon sent a sea monster that could be bought off only if the king sacrificed to it his daughter. Hercules agreed to kill the sea monster if the king gave him the magic horses he owned.

30 stand for = represent

The rest aloof are the Dardanian³¹ wives,
 With bleared³² visages come forth to view
 The issue³³ of th' exploit.³⁴ Go Hercules! 60
 Live thou,³⁵ I live, with³⁶ much more dismay³⁷
 I view the sight, than thou that mak'st the fray.³⁸

A SONG,³⁹ AS BASSANIO COMMENTS ABOUT THE CASKETS
 TO HIMSELF

Tell me where is fancy⁴⁰ bred,
 Or⁴¹ in the heart, or in the head,
 How begot, how nourishèd. 65
 Reply, reply.

It is engendered in the eyes,⁴²
 With gazing fed, and fancy dies⁴³
 In the cradle⁴⁴ where it lies.
 Let us all ring fancy's knell.⁴⁵ 70
 I'll begin it.
 Ding, dong, bell.

31 Trojan

32 tear-streaked

33 result, end, conclusion

34 endeavor, enterprise, deed (with connotations of combat)

35 live thou = if you live (i.e., prosper, succeed)

36 and with

37 terror

38 assault, attack

39 (madrigal- or round-like, sung by several voices)

40 amorous inclination ("love," though fancy also can mean whim/caprice)

41 whether

42 it IS enDJENdered IN the EYES

43 can die

44 the eyes

45 funeral bell

All Ding, dong, bell.

Bassanio So may⁴⁶ the outward shows be least themselves,

- 75 The world is still deceived with ornament.⁴⁷
 In law, what plea⁴⁸ so tainted and corrupt,
 But being seasoned⁴⁹ with a gracious voice,
 Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
 What damnèd error, but some sober brow
 80 Will bless it, and approve⁵⁰ it with a text,
 Hiding the grossness with fair ornament.
 There is no vice⁵¹ so simple, but assumes
 Some mark of virtue on his⁵² outward parts.
 How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false
 85 As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins
 The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
 Who⁵³ inward searched⁵⁴ have livers white as milk,
 And⁵⁵ these assume but⁵⁶ valor's excrement,⁵⁷
 To render⁵⁸ them redoubted.⁵⁹ Look on beauty,
 90 And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight,⁶⁰
 Which therein works a miracle in nature,

46 so may = even if

47 trappings, decorations

48 suit, action*

49 tempered, fortified*

50 prove, confirm

51 Quarto: "voice"; all editors emend

52 its

53 the cowards

54 examined

55 and yet

56 assume but = put on only

57 dregs, refuse

58 represent, give / make out, show*

59 respected, feared

60 cosmetics and fake hair were purchased by weight

Making them lightest⁶¹ that wear most of it.
 So are those crisped⁶² snaky golden locks
 (Which maketh such wanton gambols⁶³ with the wind
 Upon supposed⁶⁴ fairness) often known 95
 To be the dowry⁶⁵ of a second head,
 The skull that bred them in⁶⁶ the sepulcher.
 Thus ornament is but the guilèd⁶⁷ shore
 To a most dangerous sea, the beauteous scarf
 Veiling an Indian beauty.⁶⁸ In a word, 100
 The seeming⁶⁹ truth which cunning times⁷⁰ put on
 To entrap the wisest. Therefore then, thou gaudy⁷¹ gold,
 Hard food for Midas,⁷² I will⁷³ none of thee,
 Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge⁷⁴
 'Tween man and man. But thou, thou meager⁷⁵ lead 105
 Which rather threatnest⁷⁶ than dost promise aught,
 Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence,

61 most frivolous (pun on body weight)

62 stiffly curled

63 wanton gambols = frisky/unruly/lascivious* frolicsome movements

64 counterfeited, pretended

65 gift

66 being now in

67 treacherous

68 fair skins then meant: (1) lovely skins *and* (2) light skins, the latter nonexistent in India

69 perceived but not real

70 ages

71 showy, brilliant, ornate

72 legendary king who wished that everything he touched might turn to gold

73 want, will have

74 slave (i.e., not everyone could have gold, but silver was “commonly” – cheaply – available and used in ordinary coins)

75 lean, scanty

76 (?) because coffins were made of lead

And here choose I, joy⁷⁷ be the consequence.

Portia (*aside*) How all the other passions fleet⁷⁸ to air,

110 As⁷⁹ doubtful⁸⁰ thoughts and rash-embraced despair,

And shudd'ring fear, and green-eyed jealousy.

O love,⁸¹ be moderate, allay⁸² thy ecstasy,

In measure⁸³ rein thy joy, scant this excess.

I feel too much thy blessing, make it less,

For fear I surfeit.

115 *Bassanio* What find I here?

Fair Portia's counterfeit.⁸⁴ What demigod

Hath come so near creation?⁸⁵ Move these eyes?⁸⁶

Or whether riding on the balls of mine⁸⁷

Seem they in motion? Here are severed⁸⁸ lips

120 Parted with sugar breath: so sweet a bar⁸⁹

Should sunder⁹⁰ such sweet friends. Here in her hairs⁹¹

The painter plays the spider, and hath woven

A golden mesh t' entrap the hearts of men

77 may joy

78 drift/float up

79 like

80 ambiguous

81 i.e., the love she feels

82 abate, repress, calm

83 quantity

84 imitation, image ("picture")

85 near creation = close to physical reality

86 move these eyes = do these eyes move

87 balls of mine = my eyeballs (i.e., her eyes appear to move because his eyes move, in seeing them)

88 separated, open, parted

89 obstruction, barrier (her breath)

90 should sunder = must separate

91 hair

Faster⁹² than gnats in⁹³ cobwebs. But her eyes,
 How could he see to do them? Having made one, 125
 Methinks⁹⁴ it should have power to steal both his⁹⁵
 And leave itself unfurnished.⁹⁶ Yet look how far
 The substance⁹⁷ of my praise doth wrong this shadow
 In underprizing⁹⁸ it, so far⁹⁹ this shadow¹⁰⁰
 Doth limp behind¹⁰¹ the substance.¹⁰² (*picks up paper*) Here's 130
 the scroll,
 The continent¹⁰³ and summary of my fortune.
 You that choose not by the view¹⁰⁴
 Chance¹⁰⁵ as fair, and choose as true.¹⁰⁶
 Since this fortune falls to you,
 Be content, and seek no new.¹⁰⁷ 135
 If you be well pleased with this,
 And hold your fortune for¹⁰⁸ your bliss,
 Turn you where¹⁰⁹ your lady is,

92 more securely, tighter

93 are entrapped in

94 it seems to me

95 both his = both his eyes

96 unsupplied, not provided (with the second eye to match it)

97 matter, thrust

98 undervaluing

99 so far = so far too/equally

100 image (i.e., the painting)

101 limp behind = falls short of

102 reality (i.e., Portia herself)

103 container

104 the view = looking, appearance

105 (verb) it falls out/happens for you*

106 firmly, loyally, trustworthily

107 no new = nothing strange/unfamiliar/additional

108 as

109 to/toward where

- And claim her with a loving kiss.
- 140 A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave,
I come by note¹¹⁰ to give, and to receive,
Like one of two contending in a prize¹¹¹
That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,
Hearing applause and universal shout,
- 145 Giddy¹¹² in spirit, still gazing in a doubt
Whether those peals¹¹³ of praise be his or no.
So thrice-¹¹⁴ fair lady stand I even so,
As doubtful whether what I see be true,
Until confirmed, signed, ratified¹¹⁵ by you.¹¹⁶
- 150 *Portia* You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am. Though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish
To wish myself much better, yet for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself,
155 A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
More rich, that¹¹⁷ only to stand high in your account¹¹⁸
I might in virtues, beauties, livings,¹¹⁹ friends,
Exceed account. But the full sum of me
Is sum of something¹²⁰ – which to term in gross,¹²¹

110 by note = because/by means of what is written (in the scroll)

111 contest, match

112 dizzy, whirling

113 calls

114 triply

115 approved

116 unTIL conFIRMED signed RAtiFIED byYOU

117 so that

118 opinion, reckoning

119 faculties, functioning

120 i.e., nothing in particular/fixed/fully determined

121 term in gross = express/state plainly/bluntly

Is an unlessoned¹²² girl, unschooled,¹²³ unpracticed,¹²⁴ 160
 Happy in this, she is not yet so old
 But she may learn, happier than this,
 She is not bred¹²⁵ so dull but she can learn.
 Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
 Commits itself to yours to be directed, 165
 As from her lord, her governor, her king.
 Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours
 Is now converted.¹²⁶ But now¹²⁷ I was the lord
 Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
 Queen o'er myself. And even now, but now, 170
 This house, these servants, and this same myself
 Are yours, my lord, I give them with this ring,
 Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
 Let it presage the ruin of your love,
 And be my vantage¹²⁸ to exclaim on¹²⁹ you. 175
Bassanio Madam, you have bereft¹³⁰ me of all words,
 Only my blood speaks to you in my veins,
 And there is such¹³¹ confusion in my powers,
 As after some oration fairly¹³² spoke
 By a belovèd prince,¹³³ there doth appear 180

122 uninstructed

123 uneducated, untrained

124 inexperienced

125 is not bred = has not been reared

126 turned, changed

127 but now = a moment ago

128 opportunity

129 exclaim on = cry out against

130 deprived

131 the kind of

132 handsomely, beautifully

133 sovereign, ruler, king

Among the buzzing, pleased multitude –
 Where every something¹³⁴ being blent¹³⁵ together
 Turns to a wild¹³⁶ of nothing save of joy
 Expressed, and not expressed. But when this ring
 185 Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence!
 O then be bold to say Bassanio's dead.

Nerissa My lord and lady, it is now our time
 That have stood by and seen our wishes prosper,¹³⁷
 To cry good joy, good joy, my lord and lady.

190 *Gratiano* My Lord Bassanio, and my gentle lady,¹³⁸
 I wish you all the joy that you can wish.
 For I am sure you can wish none from me.
 And when your honors mean¹³⁹ to solemnize
 The bargain of your faith, I do beseech you
 195 Even at that time I may be married too.

Bassanio With all my heart, so¹⁴⁰ thou canst get a wife.

Gratiano I thank your lordship, you have got me one.
 My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours.
 You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid.¹⁴¹
 200 You loved, I loved. For intermission¹⁴²
 No more pertains¹⁴³ to me, my lord, than you.

134 every something = every individual thing

135 blended

136 wilderness

137 flourish, succeed, do well

138 Elizabethan audiences would have understood that Bassanio's immense new wealth, via Portia, immediately raises his social status and entitles him to exactly the deference Gratiano now extends to him

139 propose, plan

140 provided that

141 Nerissa

142 pausing ("delaying") (INterMIseeOWN)

143 applies

Your fortune stood upon the caskets there,
 And so did mine too, as the matter falls.
 For wooing here until I sweat again,¹⁴⁴
 And swearing till my very roof¹⁴⁵ was dry 205
 With oaths of love, at last (if promise last)¹⁴⁶
 I got a promise of¹⁴⁷ this fair one here
 To have her love – provided that your fortune
 Achieved¹⁴⁸ her mistress.

Portia Is this true Nerissa?
Nerissa Madam it is, so you stand pleased withal. 210

Bassanio And do you Gratiano mean good faith?
Gratiano Yes faith, my lord.
Bassanio Our feast shall be much honored in¹⁴⁹ your marriage.
Gratiano We'll play with them the first boy¹⁵⁰ for a thousand
 ducats.

Nerissa What, and stake down?¹⁵¹ 215
Gratiano No, we shall ne'er win at that sport, and stake down.¹⁵²
 But who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel?¹⁵³
 What, and my old Venetian friend Salerio?

ENTER LORENZO, JESSICA, AND SALERIO

Bassanio Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome hither –

144 (?) over and over
 145 roof of the mouth
 146 endures, holds out
 147 from
 148 gained, attained
 149 by
 150 i.e., who has the first boy-child
 151 money put up
 152 and stake down = if the penis is not erect
 153 unbeliever★

220 If that the youth¹⁵⁴ of my new interest¹⁵⁵ here
 Have power to bid you welcome. (*to Portia*) By your leave
 I bid my very friends and countrymen,
 Sweet Portia, welcome.

Portia So do I, my lord,
 They are entirely welcome.

225 *Lorenzo* I thank your honor. For my part my lord,
 My purpose was not to have seen you here,
 But meeting with Salerio by the way
 He did entreat me past all saying nay
 To come with him along.

Salerio I did my lord,
 230 And I have reason for it. (*gives letter*) Signior Antonio
 Commends him¹⁵⁶ to you.

Bassanio Ere I ope his letter
 I pray you tell me how my good friend doth.

Salerio Not sick my lord, unless it be in mind,
 Nor well, unless in mind. His letter there
 235 Will show you his estate.

BASSANIO OPENS THE LETTER

Gratiano Nerissa, cheer yond stranger,¹⁵⁷ bid her welcome.
 Your hand Salerio, what's the news from Venice?
 How doth that royal¹⁵⁸ merchant, good Antonio?
 I know he will be glad of our success,

154 newness, recentness

155 property rights

156 himself

157 newcomer (i.e., Jessica)

158 splendid, magnificent*

- We are the Jasons,¹⁵⁹ we have won the fleece. 240
- Salerio* I would you had won the fleece¹⁶⁰ that he hath lost.
- Portia* There are some shrewd¹⁶¹ contents in yond same
 paper,
 That steals the color from Bassanio's cheek.
 Some dear friend dead, else¹⁶² nothing in the world
 Could turn¹⁶³ so much the constitution¹⁶⁴ 245
 Of any constant¹⁶⁵ man. What, worse and worse?
 With leave Bassanio, I am half yourself,¹⁶⁶
 And I must freely have the half of anything
 That this same paper brings you.
- Bassanio* O sweet Portia,
 Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words 250
 That ever blotted¹⁶⁷ paper. Gentle lady,
 When I did first impart my love to you,
 I freely told you all the wealth I had
 Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman,
 And then I told you true. And yet dear lady, 255
 Rating myself at nothing, you shall see
 How much I was a braggart, when I told you
 My state was nothing. I should then have told you
 That I was worse than nothing. For indeed

159 see act 1, scene 1, nn. 170, 171

160 (almost homonymic with "fleets")

161 hurtful, injurious ("very bad")

162 otherwise

163 change

164 disposition, frame of mind

165 steadfast, resolute

166 (i.e., a married couple being a unity, each partner is a half)

167 stained, tarnished

- 260 I have engaged¹⁶⁸ myself to a dear friend,
 Engaged my friend to his mere¹⁶⁹ enemy
 To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady,
 The paper as¹⁷⁰ the body of my friend,
 And every word in it a gaping wound
 265 Issuing lifeblood. But is it true, Salerio,
 Hath all his ventures failed? What, not one hit,¹⁷¹
 From Tripolis, from Mexico and England,
 From Lisbon, Barbary, and India,
 And not one vessel scape the dreadful touch
 Of merchant-marring¹⁷² rocks?
- 270 *Salerio* Not one my lord.
 Besides, it should appear that if he had
 The present money to discharge¹⁷³ the Jew,
 He¹⁷⁴ would not take it. Never did I know
 A creature that did bear the shape of man
 275 So keen¹⁷⁵ and greedy to confound¹⁷⁶ a man.
 He plies¹⁷⁷ the Duke at morning and at night,
 And doth impeach¹⁷⁸ the freedom of the state
 If they deny him justice. Twenty merchants,
 The Duke himself, and the magnificoes¹⁷⁹

168 obliged

169 downright, entire*

170 is like

171 stroke of good luck, fortunate chance ("success")

172 ruining, destroying

173 fulfill his obligation to ("pay off")

174 Shylock

175 (1) eager, (2) harsh, cruel

176 ruin, destroy*

177 addresses himself to, works at

178 challenge, discredit*

179 the magnates/grandeest of Venice

- Of greatest port¹⁸⁰ have all persuaded with¹⁸¹ him, 280
 But none can drive him from the envious plea¹⁸²
 Of forfeiture, of justice, and his bond.
- Jessica* When I was with him, I have heard him swear
 To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,
 That he would rather have Antonio's flesh 285
 Than twenty times the value of the sum
 That he did owe him. And I know, my lord,
 If law, authority, and power deny not,
 It will go hard¹⁸³ with poor Antonio.
- Portia* Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble? 290
- Bassanio* The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
 The best conditioned,¹⁸⁴ and¹⁸⁵ unwearied spirit
 In doing courtesies. And one in whom
 The ancient Roman honor more appears
 Than any that draws breath in Italy.¹⁸⁶ 295
- Portia* What sum owes he the Jew?
- Bassanio* For me, three thousand ducats.
- Portia* What, no more?
 Pay him six thousand, and deface¹⁸⁷ the bond.
 Double six thousand, and then treble that,
 Before a friend of this description 300
 Shall lose a hair through Bassanio's fault.

180 social position

181 persuaded with = tried to convince

182 envious plea = malicious/spiteful* legal action/suit

183 go hard = fare ill

184 best conditioned = best-tempered/disposed/natured

185 and of

186 Italy was the Roman homeland

187 extinguish, wipe out

First go with me to church, and call me wife,
 And then away to Venice to your friend.
 For never shall you lie by Portia's side
 305 With an unquiet¹⁸⁸ soul. You shall have gold
 To pay the petty debt twenty times over.
 When it is paid, bring your true friend along.
 My maid Nerissa and myself meantime
 Will live as maids and widows. Come away,
 310 For you shall¹⁸⁹ hence upon your wedding day.
 Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer.¹⁹⁰
 Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.
 But let me hear the letter of your friend.

Bassanio (reads) "Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried,
 315 my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to
 the Jew is forfeit, and since in paying it, it is impossible I
 should live, all debts are cleared between you and I, if I might
 but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your
 pleasure.¹⁹¹ If your love do not persuade you to come, let not
 320 my letter."

Portia O love! Dispatch¹⁹² all business and be gone.

Bassanio Since I have your good leave to go away,
 I will make haste. But till I come again,
 No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,
 325 Nor rest be interposer 'twixt us twain.

EXEUNT

188 troubled, disturbed

189 (1) must, (2) will

190 countenance, face

191 use your pleasure = do as you think best

192 dismiss, get rid of

SCENE 3

Venice, a street

ENTER SHYLOCK, SOLANIO, ANTONIO, AND THE JAILER

Shylock Jailer, look to him, tell not me of mercy,
This is the fool that lends out money gratis.
Jailer, look to him.

Antonio Hear me yet, good Shylock.

Shylock I'll have my bond, speak not against my bond,
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond. 5
Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause,
But since I am a dog, beware my fangs,
The Duke shall¹ grant me justice. I do wonder,
Thou naughty Jailer, that thou art so fond²
To come abroad³ with him at his request. 10

Antonio I pray thee, hear me speak.

Shylock I'll have my bond, I will not hear thee speak,
I'll have my bond, and therefore speak no more,
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield 15
To Christian intercessors. Follow not,
I'll have no speaking, I will have my bond.

EXIT SHYLOCK

Solanio It is the most impenetrable⁴ cur
That ever kept⁵ with men.

1 (1) must, (2) will

2 foolish, stupid

3 to come abroad = as to come out/away from the jail

4 inscrutable, impervious, impossible (imPEnETrable)

5 stayed, carried on, lodged, remained

Antonio Let him alone,

20 I'll follow him no more with bootless⁶ prayers.
 He seeks my life, his reason well I know.
 I oft delivered⁷ from his forfeitures
 Many that have at times made moan to me,
 Therefore he hates me.

Solanio I am sure the Duke

25 Will never grant⁸ this forfeiture to hold.

Antonio The Duke cannot deny the course⁹ of law.

For the commodity¹⁰ that strangers have
 With us in Venice, if it¹¹ be denied,
 Will much impeach the justice of the state,
 30 Since that the trade and profit of the city
 Consisteth of all nations. Therefore go,
 These griefs and losses have so bated me
 That I shall hardly¹² spare a pound of flesh
 Tomorrow, to my bloody creditor.
 35 Well Jailer, on. Pray God Bassanio come
 To see me pay his debt, and then I care not.

EXEUNT

6 useless

7 freed, liberated, saved*

8 agree/consent to

9 force, forward movement*

10 benefit, convenience, advantage ("profit")

11 the course of law

12 barely be able to

SCENE 4

Belmont, Portia's house

ENTER PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA,
AND A SERVANT OF PORTIA'S

Lorenzo Madam, although I speak it in your presence,

You have a noble and a true conceit

Of godlike amity,¹ which appears most strongly

In bearing thus the absence of your lord.²

But if you knew to whom³ you show this honor,

5

How true a gentleman you⁴ send relief,

How dear a lover of my lord⁵ your husband,

I know you would be prouder of the work

Than customary bounty⁶ can enforce you.

Portia I never did repent for doing good,

10

Nor shall not now. For in companions

That do converse and waste⁷ the time together,

Whose souls do bear an egal⁸ yoke of love,

There must be needs a like proportion

Of lineaments,⁹ of manners, and of spirit,

15

Which makes me think that this Antonio,

Being the bosom¹⁰ lover of my lord,

1 friendship

2 husband

3 Antonio

4 to whom you

5 man of dignity / stature

6 goodness, kindness, generosity

7 pass, spend

8 equal

9 features, characteristics

10 heartfelt, intimate

- Must needs be like my lord. If it be so,
 How little is the cost I have bestowed
 20 In purchasing the semblance of my soul¹¹
 From out the state of hellish cruelty.
 This comes too near the praising of myself,
 Therefore no more of it. Hear other things.
 Lorenzo, I commit into your hands
 25 The husbandry¹² and manage of my house,
 Until my lord's return. For mine own part
 I have toward heaven breathed a secret vow,
 To live in prayer and contemplation,
 Only attended by Nerissa here,
 30 Until her husband, and my lord's, return.
 There is a monastery two miles off,
 And there we will abide. I do desire you
 Not to deny this imposition,¹³
 The which my love and some necessity
 Now lays upon you.
- 35 *Lorenzo* Madam, with all my heart,
 I shall obey you in all fair¹⁴ commands.
- Portia* My people do already know my mind,
 And will acknowledge¹⁵ you and Jessica
 In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.
- 40 So fare you well till we shall meet again.
- Lorenzo* Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you.

11 (i.e., Bassanio is her soul, and Antonio is the semblance of Bassanio)

12 administration ("running")

13 burden, charge, command (IMpoZIseeOWN)

14 legitimate, reasonable, clear

15 recognize, assent to

Jessica I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

Portia I thank you for your wish, and am well pleased
To wish it back on you. Fare you well, Jessica.

EXEUNT LORENZO AND JESSICA

Now Balthasar, as I have ever found thee honest true, 45

So let me find thee still. Take this same¹⁶ letter,

And use thou all the endeavor¹⁷ of a man

In speed to Padua, see thou render¹⁸ this

Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Belario,¹⁹

And look what²⁰ notes and garments²¹ he doth give thee. 50

Bring²² them I pray thee with imagined²³ speed

Unto the trajet,²⁴ to the common²⁵ ferry

Which trades²⁶ to Venice. Waste no time in words,

But get thee gone, I shall be there before thee.

Balthasar Madam, I go with all convenient speed. 55

EXIT BALTHASAR

Portia Come on Nerissa, I have work in hand

That you yet know not of. We'll see our husbands

16 (?) aforesaid

17 effort, exertion

18 give

19 i.e., not a medical doctor, but a learned lawyer

20 look what = make sure that the

21 notes and garments = crib notes as to the relevant laws in Antonio's and Shylock's case, which Portia herself knows nothing about, and also the barrister robes that must be worn in court (barristers still have "robing rooms," in which they change out of their street clothes)

22 you bring

23 all imaginable

24 ferry (Italian *traghetto*)

25 public

26 goes, crosses

Above a twelvemonth.⁴⁴ I have within my mind 75
 A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks,⁴⁵
 Which I will practice.⁴⁶

Nerissa Why, shall we turn to men?

Portia Fie, what a question's that?

If thou wert ne'er a lewd interpreter!⁴⁷
 But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device⁴⁸ 80
 When I am in my coach, which stays for us
 At the park⁴⁹ gate. And therefore haste away,
 For we must measure⁵⁰ twenty miles today.

EXEUNT

44 above a twelvemonth = more than a year ago

45 fellows, knaves

46 perform, do

47 Nerissa intends "turn" to mean "turn into"; Portia pretends Nerissa has said "direct ourselves to"

48 plan

49 the grounds/estate surrounding a mansion house

50 travel

SCENE 5

Belmont, a garden

ENTER GOBBO AND JESSICA

Gobbo Yes truly, for look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children. Therefore I promise you, I fear¹ you, I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter. Therefore be of good cheer, for truly I think you are
5 damned. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good, and that is but a kind of bastard² hope neither.³

Jessica And what hope is that, I pray thee?

Gobbo Marry, you may partly⁴ hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew's daughter.

10 *Jessica* That were a kind of bastard hope indeed, so⁵ the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.

Gobbo Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother. Thus when I shun Scylla (your father), I fall into Charybdis (your mother).⁶ Well, you are gone both ways.

15 *Jessica* I shall be saved by my husband,⁷ he hath made me a Christian.

Gobbo Truly the more to blame he. We were⁸ Christians enow⁹

1 fear for

2 illegitimate, inferior

3 as well, too

4 to some degree

5 in that case, thus

6 Scylla: a many-headed monster; Charybdis: an all-powerful whirlpool; Odysseus, in Homer's *Odyssey*, was required to steer between the two

7 "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband" (Cor. 1:14)

8 had

9 enough*

before, e'en¹⁰ as many as could well live one by¹¹ another.
 This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs.¹² If
 we grow¹³ all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly¹⁴ have 20
 a rasher¹⁵ on the coals for¹⁶ money.

ENTER LORENZO

Jessica I'll tell my husband, Lancelot, what you say, here he
 comes.¹⁷

Lorenzo I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Lancelot, if you thus
 get my wife into corners!¹⁸ 25

Jessica Nay, you need not fear us, Lorenzo. Lancelot and I are
 out.¹⁹ He tells me flatly there is no mercy for me in heaven,
 because I am a Jew's daughter. And he says you are no good
 member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to
 Christians, you raise the price of pork. 30

Lorenzo I shall answer²⁰ that better to the commonwealth, than
 you²¹ can the getting up²² of the Negro's belly. The Moor²³
 is with child by you, Lancelot.

Gobbo It is much that the Moor should be more²⁴ than

10 just

11 (1) next to, beside, (2) off

12 i.e., Jews do not eat pork, but as new Christians they will begin to

13 come ("become")

14 not shortly = soon not

15 fried/broiled bacon

16 in return/exchange for

17 Quarto: come; Folio: comes

18 i.e., tight places (bawdy)

19 unfriendly, quarreling

20 respond to such a charge★

21 Gobbo

22 producing gestation/procreation

23 (rhymes with "more"; the character is not otherwise referred to)

24 bigger

- 35 reason.²⁵ But if she be less than an honest woman, she is
indeed more than I took her for.²⁶
- Lorenzo* How every fool²⁷ can play upon the word!²⁸ I think
the best grace of wit²⁹ will shortly turn into silence, and
discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots. Go
40 in sirrah, bid them prepare for dinner!
- Gobbo* That is done sir, they have all stomachs.³⁰
- Lorenzo* Goodly Lord, what a wit-snapper³¹ are you. Then bid
them prepare dinner.
- Gobbo* That is done too, sir. Only cover³² is the word.
- 45 *Lorenzo* Will you cover³³ then, sir?
- Gobbo* Not so sir, neither, I know my duty.
- Lorenzo* Yet more quarreling³⁴ with occasion.³⁵ Wilt thou show
the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant? I pray thee
understand a plain man in his plain meaning. Go to thy
50 fellows, bid them cover the table, serve³⁶ in the meat,³⁷ and
we will come in to dinner.
- Gobbo* For³⁸ the table sir, it shall be served in.³⁹ For the meat

25 reasonably she should be

26 (i.e., I did not think even *that* well of her; “take” also means to possess sexually)

27 (Gobbo is a clown/fool)

28 the word = words

29 intellectual sharpness/quickness

30 willingness, appetite*

31 one who makes sharp remarks

32 laying the table

33 Lorenzo does not intend the word to mean, as it can, to put on one’s hat, but Gobbo so takes it

34 finding fault

35 circumstances, facts

36 bring

37 food

38 as

39 Gobbo deliberately reverses “served in” and “covered”

sir, it shall be covered. For your coming in to dinner sir, why let it be as humors⁴⁰ and conceits shall govern.

EXIT GOBBO

Lorenzo O dear discretion,⁴¹ how his words are suited.⁴² 55

The fool hath planted in his memory
An army of good words, and I do know
A many⁴³ fools that stand⁴⁴ in better place,⁴⁵
Garnished⁴⁶ like him, that for⁴⁷ a tricksy⁴⁸ word
Defy the matter.⁴⁹ How cheer'st thou,⁵⁰ Jessica? 60
And now good sweet, say thy opinion.
How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

Jessica Past all expressing. It is very meet⁵¹
The Lord Bassanio live an upright⁵² life,
For having such a blessing in his lady 65
He finds the joys of heaven here on earth,
And if on earth he do not mean it,⁵³ it⁵⁴
Is reason he should never come to heaven.
Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match,

40 temperament, mental dispositions ("moods")★

41 dear discretion = heavy-handed making of distinctions

42 sorted out, arranged, adapted

43 a many = many

44 occupy

45 positions/ jobs

46 decked out, dressed

47 for the sake of

48 playful, whimsical

49 substance ("meaning")

50 how cheer'st thou = how do you feel

51 appropriate, suitable, proper★

52 honorable, moral, correct★

53 mean it = intend to live such a life

54 that

70 And on the wager lay two earthly women,
And Portia one,⁵⁵ there must be something else
Pawned⁵⁶ with the other, for the poor rude world
Hath not her fellow.

Lorenzo E'en such a husband

Hast thou of me, as she is for a wife.

75 *Jessica* Nay, but ask my opinion too of that?

Lorenzo I will anon, first let us go to dinner!

Jessica Nay, let me praise you while I have a stomach!

Lorenzo No pray thee, let it serve for table talk,⁵⁷

Then howsome'er⁵⁸ thou speakst 'mong⁵⁹ other things,

I shall⁶⁰ digest it!

80 *Jessica* Well, I'll set you forth.⁶¹

EXEUNT

55 one of them

56 deposited, pledged

57 table talk = familiar conversation at meals

58 howsome'er = in whatever manner

59 of that among

60 shall be able to

61 set you forth = (1) lay you out (on the table), (2) give you what you deserve/need, (3) describe you, (4) praise you, (5) send you away

Act 4



SCENE I

Venice, a court of justice

ENTER THE DUKE, THE MAGNIFICOES, ANTONIO,
BASSANIO, SALERIO, AND GRATIANO

Duke What, is Antonio here?

Antonio Ready, so please your Grace!

Duke I am sorry for thee, thou art come to answer

A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch,

Uncapable of pity, void,¹ and empty

5

From any dram² of mercy.

Antonio I have heard

Your Grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify³

His rigorous course. But since he stands obdurate,⁴

And that no lawful means can carry me

Out of his envy's⁵ reach, I do oppose⁶

10

1 blank, empty ("ungraced")★

2 any dram = the least weight/liquid contents

3 modify

4 unyielding (obdurate)

5 (see "envious," in the Finding List)

6 set against

My patience to his fury, and am armed
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,
The very tyranny⁷ and rage of his.

Duke Go one⁸ and call the Jew into the court.

15 *Salerio* He is ready at the door, he comes my lord.

ENTER SHYLOCK

Duke Make room, and let him stand before our face.

Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
That thou but leadest this fashion of thy malice

To the last hour of act, and then 'tis thought
20 Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse⁹ more¹⁰ strange
Than is thy strange apparent¹¹ cruelty.

And where thou now exact'st the penalty,
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,

Thou wilt not only lose the forfeiture,
25 But touched with humane gentleness and love
Forgive a moiety¹² of the principal,

Glancing¹³ an eye of pity on his losses
That have of late so huddled¹⁴ on his back,

Enow to press a royal merchant down
30 And pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flints,

7 savage severity

8 someone

9 compassion, conscience, pity

10 are more

11 plainly visible, obvious

12 half, part (MOYeTEE)

13 shining

14 piled up

From stubborn Turks and Tartars never trained
To offices of tender courtesy.

We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

Shylock I have possessed¹⁵ your Grace of what I purpose, 35
And by our holy Sabbath¹⁶ have I sworn
To have the due¹⁷ and forfeit of my bond.
If you deny it, let the danger light¹⁸
Upon your charter¹⁹ and your city's freedom!
You'll ask me why I rather choose to have 40
A weight of carrion flesh, than to receive
Three thousand ducats? I'll not answer that.
But say it is my humor: is it answered?
What if my house be troubled with a rat,
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats 45
To have it baned?²⁰ What, are you answered yet?
Some men there are²¹ love not a gaping pig,²²
Some that are mad if they behold a cat,
And others, when the bagpipe sings i'th' nose,²³

15 told

16 "The pious [Jews] in all ages were careful to avoid oaths, especially judicial oaths. . . . [Further, it] is a cardinal rabbinic principle that if a human life is in danger . . . , everything possible must be done even on the Sabbath to save it" (Cecil Roth, ed., *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* [New York: Doubleday, 1962], 1441, 1634)

17 debt

18 danger light = loss/harm descend

19 engendering document ("constitution")

20 poisoned, killed

21 are who

22 gaping pig = roasted pig, brought to the table with its mouth either open or containing an apple

23 i.e., nasally

- 50 Cannot contain their urine²⁴ – for affection,²⁵
 Master of passion, sways it to the mood
 Of what it likes or loathes. Now for your answer.
 As²⁶ there is no firm reason to be rendered²⁷
 Why *he* cannot abide a gaping pig,
 55 Why *he* a harmless, necessary cat,
 Why *he* a woolen²⁸ bagpipe, but of force²⁹
 Must yield to such inevitable shame
 As to offend, himself being offended,
 So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
 60 More than a lodged³⁰ hate, and a certain loathing
 I bear Antonio, that I follow³¹ thus
 A losing suit against him. Are you answered?
Bassanio This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,
 To excuse the current³² of thy cruelty!
 65 *Shylock* I am not bound to please thee with my answer!
Bassanio Do all men kill the things they do not love?
Shylock Hates any man the thing he would not³³ kill?
Bassanio Every offense³⁴ is not a hate at first.
Shylock What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

24 *either* (1) their very body revolts at the ghastly sound of the bagpipe, *or* (2) the music is so wrenchingly sad that the body as well as the eyes weep (cf. act I, scene I, n. 61)

25 emotion

26 just as

27 given

28 the bags are wrapped in cloth, when not in use

29 of force = by force

30 established

31 pursue*

32 (1) force, violence, (2) course, direction

33 would not = does not wish to

34 harm, hurt

Antonio (to *Bassanio*) I pray you think you question³⁵ with the Jew. 70

You may as well go stand upon the beach
And bid the main flood³⁶ bate his usual height,
Or even as well use question with the wolf
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb.
You may as well forbid the mountain pines 75
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
When they are fretted³⁷ with the gusts of heaven.

You may as well do anything most hard,
As seek to soften that than which what's harder?
— His Jewish heart. Therefore I do beseech you 80
Make no more offers, use no farther means,
But with all brief and plain conveniency³⁸
Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will.³⁹

Bassanio For thy three thousand ducats, here is six.

Shylock If every ducat in six thousand ducats 85
Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,
I would not draw⁴⁰ them, I would have my bond!

Duke How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering⁴¹ none?

Shylock What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
You have among you many a purchased slave, 90
Which like your asses, and your dogs and mules

35 think you question = remind yourself that you dispute*

36 main flood = (1) high tide, (2) the ocean*

37 agitated, ruffled

38 convenience

39 his will = what he wants

40 take

41 giving

You use in abject⁴² and in slavish parts,⁴³
 Because you bought them. Shall I say to you,
 Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
 95 Why sweat they under burthens?⁴⁴ Let their beds
 Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates⁴⁵
 Be seasoned⁴⁶ with such⁴⁷ viands, you will answer
 The slaves are ours. So do I answer you.
 The pound of flesh which I demand of him
 100 Is dearly bought, 'tis mine, and I will have it.
 If you deny me, fie upon your law,
 There is no force in the decrees of Venice.
 I stand for⁴⁸ judgment. Answer, shall I have it?
Duke Upon⁴⁹ my power I may⁵⁰ dismiss⁵¹ this court,
 105 Unless Belario, a learnèd doctor,⁵²
 Whom I have sent for to determine⁵³ this,
 Come here today.
Salerio My Lord, here stays without⁵⁴
 A messenger with letters⁵⁵ from the doctor,

42 degraded, despicable

43 functions, duties

44 burdens

45 taste ("mouths")

46 made savory

47 of the same kind (as yours)

48 stand for = await

49 by means of, in accord with

50 may choose to

51 (it is not clear whether the Duke is considering adjourning the court, to await Belario's appearance, or discharging it entirely; the legal procedures in the play do not correspond to those of either Venice or Elizabethan England)

52 doctor of law

53 (1) decide, settle, (2) terminate, conclude

54 outside

55 letter

New come from Padua.

Duke Bring us⁵⁶ the letters! Call the messengers! 110

Bassanio Good cheer Antonio. What man, courage yet.

The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all,

Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

Antonio I am a tainted wether⁵⁷ of the flock,
Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit 115

Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me.

You cannot better be employed, Bassanio,

Than to live still, and write mine epitaph.

ENTER NERISSA

Duke Came you from Padua, from Belario?

Nerissa From both. My Lord Belario greets your Grace. 120

Bassanio (to *Shylock*) Why dost thou whet⁵⁸ thy knife so
earnestly?

Shylock To cut the forfeiture from that bankrout there.

Gratiano Not on thy sole,⁵⁹ but on thy soul, harsh Jew,
Thou mak'st thy knife keen. But no metal can –
No, not the hangman's ax – bear half the keenness 125
Of thy sharp⁶⁰ envy. Can no prayers pierce thee?

Shylock No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

Gratiano O be thou damned, execrable⁶¹ dog,
And for thy life let justice be accused.

56 me (the royal “we”)

57 tainted wether = decayed/contaminated castrated ram (bellwether: ram with a bell hung around his neck)

58 sharpen

59 i.e., Shylock whets his knife on the sole of his shoe/boot

60 keen, ardent, eager

61 execrable, cursed

- 130 Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,
 To⁶² hold opinion with Pythagoras,
 That souls of animals infuse⁶³ themselves
 Into the trunks⁶⁴ of men. Thy currish spirit
 Governed a wolf who, hanged for human slaughter,
 135 Even⁶⁵ from the gallows did his fell⁶⁶ soul fleet,⁶⁷
 And whil'st thou layest in thy unhallowed⁶⁸ dam,
 Infused itself in thee.⁶⁹ For thy desires
 Are wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous.
- Shylock* Till thou canst rail⁷⁰ the seal from off my bond
- 140 Thou but offend'st⁷¹ thy lungs to speak so loud.
 Repair⁷² thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
 To endless ruin. I stand here for law.
- Duke* This letter from Belario doth commend⁷³
 A young and learnèd doctor to our court.⁷⁴
 Where is he?
- 145 *Nerissa* He attendeth here hard by
 To know your answer, whether you'll admit⁷⁵ him.

62 and to

63 instill, insinuate*

64 bodies

65 directly

66 savage, ruthless, cruel

67 flow, fly, pass

68 (1) impious, wicked, (2) unconsecrated ("not baptized")

69 i.e., in utero

70 affect/move by cursing

71 violate, wrong

72 set in order

73 recommend

74 to our court = *either* (1) he is recommended to us (as a lawyer), *or* (2) he is recommended as someone to join the court, as a judge

75 (1) receive, *or* (2) make him a member of the court

Duke With all my heart. Some three or four of you
 Go give him courteous conduct⁷⁶ to this place.
 Meantime the court shall hear Belario's letter:
*(reading aloud)*⁷⁷ "Your Grace shall understand, that at the 150
 receipt of your letter I am⁷⁸ very sick, but in the instant that
 your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a
 young doctor⁷⁹ of Rome, his name is Balthasar. I acquainted
 him with the cause⁸⁰ in controversy between the Jew and
 Antonio the merchant. We turned o'er⁸¹ many books 155
 together. He is furnished with my opinion, which bettered⁸²
 with his own learning (the greatness whereof I cannot
 enough commend), comes⁸³ with him at my importunity⁸⁴
 to fill up your Grace's request in my stead.⁸⁵ I beseech you,
 let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a 160
 reverend⁸⁶ estimation, for I never knew so young a body with
 so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose
 trial⁸⁷ shall better publish⁸⁸ his commendation."

ENTER PORTIA, DRESSED IN LAWYER'S ROBES

76 escort

77 it is not clear whether it is the Duke or a court official who reads the letter
 aloud

78 was

79 lawyer

80 case, action*

81 turned o'er = read through, searched, perused

82 improved

83 i.e., Belario's opinion comes

84 solicitation, urging

85 (it is not clear exactly what the Duke has requested of Belario)

86 respectful, courteous

87 putting to the proof, testing ("performance")

88 declare

- Duke* You hear the learn'd Belario what he writes,
 165 And here (I take it) is the doctor come.
 Give me your hand. Came you from old Belario?
- Portia* I did my lord.
- Duke* You are⁸⁹ welcome, take your place.⁹⁰
 Are you acquainted with the difference⁹¹
 That holds⁹² this present question in the court?
- 170 *Portia* I am informed thoroughly of the cause.
 Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?
- Duke* Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.⁹³
- Portia* Is your name Shylock?
- Shylock* Shylock is my name.
- Portia* Of a strange nature is the suit you follow,
 175 Yet in such rule⁹⁴ that the Venetian law
 Cannot impugn⁹⁵ you as you do proceed.
 (to Antonio) You stand within his danger,⁹⁶ do you not?
- Antonio* Ay, so he says.
- Portia* Do you confess the bond?
- Antonio* I do.
- Portia* Then must the Jew be merciful.
- 180 *Shylock* On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.
- Portia* The quality of mercy is not strained,⁹⁷

89 you are = you're (for metrical reasons)

90 (?) probably a table set aside for lawyers, in the space in front of the judge
 and members of the court

91 disagreement

92 keeps

93 stand forth = step forward

94 regulation, force ("principle")

95 oppose

96 power to harm you

97 forced, labored, artificial

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place⁹⁸ beneath. It is twice blest,
 It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes 185
 The thronèd monarch better than his crown.
 His scepter shows the force of temporal⁹⁹ power,
 The attribute to¹⁰⁰ awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings.
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway, 190
 It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself.
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons justice. Therefore Jew,
 Though justice be thy plea, consider this, 195
 That in the course of justice none of us
 Should¹⁰¹ see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render¹⁰²
 The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
 To mitigate¹⁰³ the justice of thy plea, 200
 Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice¹⁰⁴
 Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.
Shylock My deeds¹⁰⁵ upon my head, I crave¹⁰⁶ the law,

98 i.e., the earth

99 secular, mortal, temporary

100 attribute to = quality/character of

101 would

102 give

103 ease, lessen, abate

104 (it is not clear, still, whether Portia speak *to*, *of*, or – as a judge – *for* the court)

105 my deeds = let my deeds be

106 demand

The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

205 *Portia* Is he¹⁰⁷ not able to discharge the money?

Bassanio Yes, here I tender¹⁰⁸ it for him in the court,

Yea, twice the sum. If that will not suffice,

I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,

On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart.

210 If this will not suffice, it must appear

That malice bears down¹⁰⁹ truth. And I beseech you¹¹⁰

Wrest once¹¹¹ the law to your authority.

To do a great right, do a little wrong,

And curb this cruel divel of his will.

215 *Portia* It must not be, there is no power in Venice

Can alter a decree establishèd.¹¹²

'Twill be recorded for a precedent,

And many an error by the same example¹¹³

Will rush into the state. It cannot be.

220 *Shylock* A Daniel¹¹⁴ come to judgment, yea a Daniel.

O wise young judge,¹¹⁵ how I do honor thee.

Portia (to *Shylock*) I pray you, let me look upon¹¹⁶ the bond.

107 Antonio

108 offer, lay down

109 bears down = overthrows, vanquishes, overwhelms

110 the court, especially the Duke? or Portia, speaking for the court?

111 wrest once = wrench/bend just once

112 decree establishèd = firm / fixed decision / law / statute

113 model, pattern

114 Jewish prophet, exiled to Babylon

115 Balthasar/Portia's exact status seems here to become clearer, though Shakespeare's legal arrangements do not completely fit either Elizabethan English or Renaissance Venetian law: she is appointed a kind of legal arbiter/referee, serving *pro tem* (temporarily) as a judge; this makes at least a degree of legal sense (N.B. the editor of this edition is a lawyer and a member of the Bar of the State of New York)

116 at

Shylock Here 'tis, most reverend doctor, here it is.

Portia Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee.

Shylock An oath, an oath, I have¹¹⁷ an oath in¹¹⁸ heaven. 225

Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?

No, not for Venice.

Portia Why, this bond is forfeit,¹¹⁹

And lawfully by this the Jew may claim

A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off

Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful, 230

Take thrice thy money, bid me tear¹²⁰ the bond.

Shylock When it is paid according to the tenure.¹²¹

It doth appear you are a worthy judge,

You know the law, your exposition

Hath been most sound. I charge you by the law, 235

Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,

Proceed to judgment. By my soul I swear

There is no power in the tongue of man

To alter me. I stay here on my bond.

Antonio Most heartily I do beseech the court 240

To give the judgment.

Portia Why, then thus it is.¹²²

You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

Shylock O noble judge, O excellent young man.

Portia For the intent and purpose of the law

117 have made

118 to

119 is forfeit = is now in a state of forfeit ("has been forfeited")

120 rip up

121 terms, tenor

122 there is no doubt, here, of Portia's legal status: she speaks *for* the court

- 245 Hath full relation¹²³ to the penalty,
Which¹²⁴ here appeareth due upon the bond.
- Shylock* 'Tis very true. O wise and upright judge,
How much more elder art thou than thy looks!
- Portia* (to *Antonio*) Therefore lay bare your bosom.
- Shylock* Aye, his
breast,
- 250 So says the bond, doth it not, noble judge?
Nearest his heart, those are the very words.
- Portia* It is so. Are there balance¹²⁵ here to weigh the flesh?
- Shylock* I have them ready.
- Portia* Have by some surgeon,¹²⁶ *Shylock*, on your charge,¹²⁷
- 255 To stop his wounds, lest he should bleed to death.
- Shylock* Is it so nominated¹²⁸ in the bond?
- Portia* It is not so expressed, but what of that?
'Twere good you do so¹²⁹ much for charity.
- Shylock* (*examining document*) I cannot find it, 'tis not in the
bond.
- 260 *Portia* Come merchant, have you anything to say?
- Antonio* But little. I am armed¹³⁰ and well prepared.
Give me your hand, Bassanio, fare you well.
Grieve not that I am fall'n to this for you,
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind

123 applicability ("connection, relevancy")

124 the penalty

125 scales

126 physician, medical man (the role we assign to "surgeons," today, was filled by barbers)

127 on your charge = at your expense*

128 designated, specified

129 that

130 ready

Than is her custom. It is still her use 265
 To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
 To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
 An age¹³¹ of poverty. From which ling'ring penance
 Of such miser doth she cut me off.
 Commend me to your honorable wife, 270
 Tell her the process¹³² of Antonio's end,
 Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death.
 And when the tale is told, bid her be judge
 Whether Bassanio had not once a love.¹³³
 Repent not you that you shall lose your friend, 275
 And he repents not that he pays your debt.
 For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
 I'll pay it instantly,¹³⁴ with all my heart.¹³⁵
Bassanio Antonio, I am married to a wife
 Which is as dear to me as life itself, 280
 But life itself, my wife, and all the world
 Are not with me esteemed above thy life.
 I would lose all, I sacrifice¹³⁶ them all
 Here to this devil, to deliver you.
Portia Your wife would give you little thanks for that 285
 If she were by to hear you make the offer.
Gratiano I have a wife whom I protest I love,
 I would¹³⁷ she were in heaven, so she could

131 old age

132 events, progress

133 had not once a love = did not once/at one time have a true friend

134 to pay one's death (to nature) = to die

135 all my heart = (1) my entire heart will stop, (2) gladly

136 I sacrifice = I would sacrifice

137 I would = but I wish

Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.

290 *Nerissa* 'Tis well you offer it behind her back,

The wish would make else an unquiet house.

Shylock These be the Christian husbands. I have a daughter:

Would any of the stock¹³⁸ of Barrabas¹³⁹

Had been her husband, rather than a Christian.

295 *We* trifle¹⁴⁰ time, I pray thee pursue¹⁴¹ sentence.

Portia A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine,

The court awards it, and the law doth give it.

Shylock Most rightful¹⁴² judge.

Portia And you must cut this flesh from off his breast.

300 The law allows it, and the court awards it.

Shylock Most learnèd judge – a sentence – come, prepare.

Portia Tarry a little, there is something else.

This bond doth give thee here¹⁴³ no jot of blood,

The words expressly are a pound of flesh.

305 Then take thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh,

But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed

One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods

Are by the laws of Venice confiscate¹⁴⁴

Unto the state of Venice.

Gratiano O upright judge!

310 Mark, Jew! O learnèd judge.

138 race, ancestry

139 the Jewish prisoner released, instead of Jesus: see Matt. 27:15–26
(BAraBAS)

140 toy with, waste

141 proceed to

142 just, righteous

143 in this writing

144 forfeited

Shylock Is that the law?

Portia Thyself shalt see the act.¹⁴⁵

For as thou urgest justice, be assured

Thou shalt have justice more than thou desirest.¹⁴⁶

Gratiano O learned judge! Mark, Jew! A learned judge.

Shylock I take this offer then. Pay the bond thrice, 315

And let the Christian go.

Bassanio Here is the money.

Portia Soft!

The Jew shall have all justice.¹⁴⁷ Soft, no haste,

He shall¹⁴⁸ have nothing but the penalty.

Gratiano O Jew! An upright judge, a learned judge! 320

Portia Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh,

Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more

But just¹⁴⁹ a pound of flesh. If thou tak'st more

Or less than a just pound, be it so much

As makes it light or heavy in the substance,¹⁵⁰ 325

Or the division of the twentieth part

Of one poor scruple,¹⁵¹ nay if the scale do turn

But in the estimation¹⁵² of a hair,

Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.

Gratiano A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew! 330

145 law, statute, decree

146 N.B. the distinction between justice (common law) and morality (the law of equity) is in fact made by English law

147 all justice = the whole extent of justice (and nothing else/more)

148 will

149 exactly

150 material (flesh)

151 a very small unit of weight, 1/24 oz.

152 value ("degree")

Now infidel, I have thee on the hip.¹⁵³

Portia Why doth the Jew pause? Take thy forfeiture.

Shylock Give me my principal,¹⁵⁴ and let me go.

Bassanio I have it ready for thee, here it is.

335 *Portia* He hath refused it in the open court,¹⁵⁵

He shall have merely justice and his bond.

Gratiano A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel!

I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

Shylock Shall¹⁵⁶ I not have barely¹⁵⁷ my principal?

340 *Portia* Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture,

To be taken so at thy peril, Jew.

Shylock Why then the devil give him good of it.

I'll stay no longer question.¹⁵⁸

Portia Tarry, Jew,

The law hath yet another hold on you.

345 It is enacted in the laws of Venice,

If it be proved against an alien

That by direct, or indirect, attempts

He seek the life of any citizen,

The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive¹⁵⁹

350 Shall seize¹⁶⁰ one half his goods, the other half

Comes to the privy coffer¹⁶¹ of the state,

And the offender's life lies in the mercy

153 on the hip = at a disadvantage

154 the sum of the loan, 3,000 ducats

155 open court = publicly

156 must

157 all

158 stay no longer question = wait for no more disputing

159 plot, conspire

160 shall seize = shall be put in possession of

161 privy coffer = the Duke's treasury ("private treasure box")

Of the Duke only,¹⁶² 'gainst all other voice.
 In which predicament¹⁶³ I say thou standst.
 For it appears by manifest proceeding,¹⁶⁴ 355
 That indirectly, and directly too,
 Thou hast contrived against the very life
 Of the defendant. And thou hast incurred¹⁶⁵
 The danger formerly by me rehearsed.¹⁶⁶
 Down¹⁶⁷ therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke. 360
Gratiano Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself,
 And yet thy wealth being forfeit to the state
 Thou hast not left the value of a cord.¹⁶⁸
 Therefore thou must be hanged at the state's charge.
Duke That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit, 365
 I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.
 For¹⁶⁹ half thy wealth, it is Antonio's.
 The other half comes to the general¹⁷⁰ state,
 Which humbleness may drive unto¹⁷¹ a fine.
Portia Ay, for the state,¹⁷² not for Antonio. 370
Shylock Nay, take my life and all. Pardon not that!
 You take my house, when you do take the prop
 That doth sustain my house. You take my life

162 alone

163 situation, position

164 manifest proceeding = obvious/clear actions/conduct

165 made yourself liable to

166 stated

167 kneel down

168 rope

169 as for

170 whole

171 drive unto = put off/defer/pass/settle into

172 the fine is to be paid to the state, not to Antonio

When you do take the means whereby I live.

375 *Portia* What mercy can you render¹⁷³ him, Antonio?

Gratiano A halter¹⁷⁴ – gratis.¹⁷⁵ Nothing else, for God's sake.

Antonio So please my lord the Duke, and all the court

To quit¹⁷⁶ the fine for one half of his goods.

I am content, so¹⁷⁷ he will let me have

380 The other half in use,¹⁷⁸ to render¹⁷⁹ it,

Upon his death, unto the gentleman

That lately stole his daughter.

Two things provided more,¹⁸⁰ that for this favor

He presently become a Christian,

385 The other, that he do record¹⁸¹ a gift

Here in the Court of all he dies possessed

Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

Duke He shall¹⁸² do this, or else I do recant¹⁸³

The pardon that I late pronouncèd here.

390 *Portia* Art thou contented,¹⁸⁴ Jew? What dost thou say?

Shylock I am content.

Portia Clerk, draw¹⁸⁵ a deed of gift.

Shylock I pray you give me leave to go from hence.

173 give

174 rope for hanging

175 free of charge

176 release, remit

177 as long as

178 trust

179 give

180 two things provided more = two more conditions

181 declare, register

182 must

183 withdraw, retract

184 satisfied

185 draw up, write out

I am not well, send the deed¹⁸⁶ after me,

And I will sign it.

Duke Get thee gone, but do it.

Gratiano In christening thou shalt have two godfathers. 395

Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more,¹⁸⁷

To bring thee to the gallows, not to the font.¹⁸⁸

EXIT SHYLOCK

Duke (to *Portia*) Sir, I entreat you with me home to dinner.¹⁸⁹

Portia I humbly do desire your Grace of pardon,

I must away this night toward Padua, 400

And it is meet I presently set forth.

Duke I am sorry that your leisure serves you not.

Antonio, gratify¹⁹⁰ this gentleman,

For in my mind you are much bound to him.

EXIT DUKE AND ATTENDANTS

Bassanio Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend 405

Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted

Of grievous penalties, in lieu whereof¹⁹¹

Three thousand ducats due unto the Jew

We freely cope¹⁹² your courteous pains withal.

Antonio And stand indebted over and above 410

In love and service to you evermore.

186 agreement of gift

187 i.e., forming a jury of twelve

188 baptismal font

189 sir I enTREAT you WITH me HOME to DINner

190 (1) thank, (2) reward ("pay")

191 instead of which

192 give away in exchange for★ which

Portia He is well paid that is well satisfied,
And I, delivering you, am satisfied,
And therein do account myself well paid.

415 My mind was never yet more mercenary.¹⁹³
I pray you know¹⁹⁴ me when we meet again.
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

Bassanio Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further,¹⁹⁵
Take some remembrance of us as a tribute,
420 Not as fee. Grant me two things, I pray you:
Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

Portia You press me far, and therefore I will yield.
Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake,
And for your love I'll take this ring from you.

425 Do not draw back your hand, I'll take no more,
And you in love shall¹⁹⁶ not deny me this?

Bassanio This ring, good sir, alas, it is a trifle,
I will not shame myself to give you this.

Portia I will have nothing else but only this,

430 And now methinks I have a mind¹⁹⁷ to it.

Bassanio There's more depends on¹⁹⁸ this than on the value.
The dearest¹⁹⁹ ring in Venice will I give you:
And find it out²⁰⁰ by proclamation.²⁰¹
Only for this I pray you pardon²⁰² me.

193 motivated by money

194 acknowledge, recognize

195 attempt you further = make a further attempt with you

196 will

197 desire, wish

198 depends on = is connected/attached to

199 most expensive

200 find it out = locate the most expensive ring in Venice

201 public notice

202 excuse

Portia I see sir you are liberal in offers.²⁰³ 435

You taught me first to beg, and now methinks

You teach me how a beggar should²⁰⁴ be answered.

Bassanio Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife,

And when she put it on she made me vow

That I should neither sell, nor give, nor lose it. 440

Portia That 'scuse serves many men to save²⁰⁵ their gifts,

And if your wife be not a madwoman,

And know how well I have deserved this ring,

She would not hold out enemy²⁰⁶ forever

For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you. 445

EXEUNT PORTIA AND NERISSA

Antonio My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring,

Let his deservings and my love withal

Be valued against²⁰⁷ your wife's commandment.²⁰⁸

Bassanio Go Gratiano, run and overtake him,

Give him the ring, and bring him if thou canst 450

Unto Antonio's house. Away, make haste.

EXIT GRATIANO

Come, you and I will thither presently,

And in the morning early will we both

Fly toward Belmont. Come Antonio.

EXEUNT

203 liberal in offers = generous – but only in what you offer, not in what you give

204 must

205 rescue

206 opposed

207 in comparison to

208 injunction, warning

SCENE 2

Venice, a street

ENTER PORTIA AND NERISSA

Portia Inquire the Jew's house out, give him this deed,
And let him sign it. We'll away tonight,
And be a day before our husbands home.
This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.

ENTER GRATIANO

5 *Gratiano* Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en.
My Lord Bassanio, upon more advice,¹
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat
Your company at dinner.

Portia That cannot be.
His ring I do accept most thankfully,
10 And so² I pray you tell him. Furthermore,
I pray you show my youth old Shylock's house.
Gratiano That will I do.

Nerissa (to *Portia*) Sir, I would speak with you.
(*aside*) I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,
Which I did make him swear to keep forever.

15 *Portia* Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall have old³ swearing
That they did give the rings away to men,
But we'll outface them, and outswear them, too.
(*aloud*) Away, make haste, thou know'st where I will tarry.

Nerissa (to *Gratiano*) Come good sir, will you show me to this
house?

EXEUNT

1 (1) consideration, (2) counsel, opinion

2 thus

3 abundant, grand

Act 5



SCENE I

Belmont, Portia's garden

ENTER LORENZO AND JESSICA

Lorenzo The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, in such a night
Troilus methinks mounted¹ the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents
Where Cressed lay that night.²

5

Jessica In such a night
Did Thisbe³ fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,⁴

1 climbed onto

2 Troilus was Cressida's true love, Cressida was Troilus' wandering mistress, in both Chaucer's *Troilus and Cresseida* and Shakespeare's 1601–1602 *Troilus and Cressida*

3 heroine of the tale (retold comically in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*) of *Pyramus and Thisbe*: she drops her cape as she runs; Pyramus finds it, badly mauled, and thinks a lion has killed her; he kills himself; she finds him and kills herself, too – a typical bit of the blood-and-gore of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

4 ere himself = moving in front of him

And ran dismayed⁵ away.

Lorenzo In such a night

10 Stood Dido⁶ with a willow⁷ in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks,⁸ and waft⁹ her love
To come again to Carthage.

Jessica In such a night

Medea¹⁰ gathered the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Eson.¹¹

Lorenzo In such a night

15 Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
And with an unthrift¹² love did run from Venice,
As far as Belmont.

Jessica In such a night

Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one.

20 *Lorenzo* In such a night

Did pretty Jessica (like a little shrow)¹³
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

Jessica I would out-night you did nobody come,
But hark, I hear the footing¹⁴ of a man.

5 frightened

6 queen of Carthage, loved and then deserted by Aeneas, founder of Rome

7 willow branch (symbol of grief for unrequited love)

8 hills/slopes on a sea shore

9 waved, signaled

10 Greek princess and enchantress, who helped Jason capture the Golden Fleece but was deserted by him

11 Jason's father, restored to youth by Medea's magic

12 spendthrift, prodigal, shiftless, dissolute

13 shrew, wretch

14 steps

ENTER MESSENGER

Lorenzo Who comes so fast in silence of the night? 25

Messenger A friend.

Lorenzo A friend, what friend? Your name I pray you, friend?

Messenger Stephano is my name, and I bring word

My mistress will before the break of day

Be here at Belmont. She doth stray¹⁵ about 30

By holy crosses¹⁶ where she kneels and prays

For happy wedlock hours.

Lorenzo Who comes with her?

Messenger None but a holy hermit and her maid.

I pray you, is my master yet returned?

Lorenzo He is not, nor we have not heard from him. 35

But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,

And ceremoniously¹⁷ let us prepare

Some welcome for the mistress of the house,

ENTER GOBBO

Gobbo Sola, sola! Wo ha ho, sola, sola!¹⁸

Lorenzo Who calls? 40

Gobbo Sola! Did you see¹⁹ Master Lorenzo? Master Lorenzo,
sola, sola!

Lorenzo Leave holloaing,²⁰ man. Here.²¹

Gobbo Sola! Where, where?

15 roam, wander

16 crosses placed in well-frequented public places, for devotional purposes

17 in proper observance

18 an imitation of hunting calls/cries

19 did you see = have you seen

20 leave holloaing = stop making hunting calls

21 here I am

Lorenzo Here!

45 *Gobbo* Tell him there's a post come from my master, with his
horn²² full of good news. My master will be here ere
morning, sweet soul.

EXIT GOBBO

Lorenzo Let's in, and there expect²³ their coming.

And yet no matter. Why should we go in?

50 My friend Stephano, signify, pray you,
Within the house, your mistress is at hand,²⁴
And bring your music²⁵ forth into the air.

EXIT STEPHANO

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.²⁶

Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music

55 Creep in our ears. Soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches²⁷ of sweet harmony.

Sit Jessica, look how the floor of heaven²⁸

Is thick inlaid with patens²⁹ of bright gold.

There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdst

60 But in his motion like an angel sings,³⁰

22 post men announced their coming with a horn; Gobbo blends this with
"horn" in the sense of a receptacle made of horn, overflowing like a
cornucopia or "horn of plenty"

23 await, anticipate

24 at hand = near, close by

25 group of musicians

26 bench

27 playing

28 floor of heaven = the night sky

29 thin circular metallic plates, like tiles

30 i.e., producing, according to this Ptolemaic cosmology, the "music of the
spheres"

Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubins.³¹
 Such harmony is in immortal souls,
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay³²
 Doth grossly³³ close in it,³⁴ we cannot hear it.

ENTER MUSICIANS

Come ho, and wake Diana³⁵ with a hymn! 65
 With sweetest touches pierce your mistress³⁶ ear,
 And draw her home with music.

Jessica I am never merry when I hear sweet³⁷ music.

MUSIC

Lorenzo The reason is, your spirits are attentive.³⁸
 For do but note a wild and wanton herd 70
 Or race³⁹ of youthful and unhandled⁴⁰ colts,
 Fetching⁴¹ mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
 Which is the hot condition of their blood.
 If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
 Or any air⁴² of music touch their ears, 75

31 angels

32 muddy vesture of decay = dirt-garment, mortal and subject (as heavenly creatures are not) to decay

33 materially (i.e., with earthly material)

34 close in it = close it in

35 the moon

36 N.B. Elizabethan usage did not require, nor does the Quarto employ, an apostrophe to indicate the possessive; addition of an apostrophe would negatively affect the meter

37 softly/delicately/gently agreeable/charming/melodious

38 observant, intent

39 stud (a group of animals used for breeding purposes)

40 untamed, not yet broken

41 performing, making

42 (1) breath, sound, (2) melody

You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,⁴³
 Their savage eyes turned⁴⁴ to a modest⁴⁵ gaze
 By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet
 Did feign that Orpheus drew⁴⁶ trees, stones, and floods.
 80 Since naught so stockish,⁴⁷ hard, and full of rage,
 But music for the time doth change his nature.
 The man that hath no music in himself,
 Nor is not moved with concord⁴⁸ of sweet sounds,
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems,⁴⁹ and spoils,⁵⁰
 85 The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
 And his affections dark as Erebus.⁵¹
 Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

ENTER PORTIA AND NERISSA

Portia That light we see is burning in my hall.
 How far that little candle throws his beams.
 90 So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
Nerissa When the moon shone we did not see the candle.
Portia So doth the greater glory dim the less.
 A substitute shines brightly as a king
 Until a king be by, and then his state⁵²
 95 Empties itself, as doth an inland brook

43 mutual stand = collective stop

44 transformed

45 moderate, orderly

46 attracted

47 stupid, dull ("wooden")

48 harmony

49 schemes, plotting

50 plundering, pillage, rapine

51 a place of darkness, between the world and Hades

52 status, high rank

Into the main of waters. Music, hark.

MUSIC

Nerissa It is your music, madam, of ⁵³ the house.

Portia Nothing is good I see without respect.⁵⁴

Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day!

Nerissa Silence bestows that virtue⁵⁵ on it, madam. 100

Portia The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark

When neither is attended,⁵⁶ and I think

The nightingale, if she should sing by day,

When every goose is cackling, would be thought

No better a musician than the wren. 105

How many things by season seasoned are

To their right praise, and true perfection.

Peace!⁵⁷ How the moon sleeps with Endymion,⁵⁸

And would not be awaked.

MUSIC CEASES

Lorenzo That is the voice,

Or I am much deceived, of Portia. 110

Portia He knows me as the blind man knows the cuckoo,

By the bad voice!

Lorenzo Dear lady, welcome home!

Portia We have been praying for our husbands' welfare,

53 from

54 a connection ("context")

55 power

56 accompanied (i.e., when they are alone)

57 be quiet

58 a beautiful young man, charmed into eternal sleep (though the tale does not fully explain why)

Which speed⁵⁹ we hope the better for our words.

Are they returned?

115 *Lorenzo* Madam, they are not yet:

But there is come a messenger before

To signify their coming.

Portia Go in, Nerissa,

Give order to my servants, that they take

No note at all of our being absent hence,

120 Nor you, Lorenzo — Jessica, nor you.

A TUCKET⁶⁰ SOUNDS

Lorenzo Your husband is at hand, I hear his trumpet.

We are no telltales, madam, fear you not.

Portia This night methinks is but the daylight sick,

It looks a little paler, 'tis a day,

125 Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

ENTER BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, AND ATTENDANTS

Bassanio We should hold day⁶¹ with the Antipodes,⁶²

If you would walk in absence of the sun.

Portia Let me give light, but let me not be light,

For a light wife doth make a heavy husband,

130 And⁶³ never be Bassanio so for me.

But God sort⁶⁴ all. You are welcome home, my lord.

59 prosper, succeed

60 trumpet flourish

61 should hold day = would be matching our sequence of day and night with that in the Antipodes

62 those who live on the opposite side of the earth

63 and may

64 dispose, ordain, order

Bassanio I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend,
 This is the man, this is Antonio,
 To whom I am so infinitely bound.

Portia You should in all sense⁶⁵ be much bound to him, 135
 For as I hear he was much bound⁶⁶ for you.

Antonio No more than I am well acquitted⁶⁷ of.

Portia Sir, you are very welcome to our house.
 It must appear in other ways than words,
 Therefore I scant this breathing⁶⁸ courtesy. 140

Gratiano (to *Nerissa*) By yonder moon I swear you do me
 wrong.

In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk.
 Would he were gelt⁶⁹ that had it for my part,
 Since you do take it, love, so much at heart.

Portia A quarrel, ho, already! What's the matter? 145

Gratiano About a hoop⁷⁰ of gold, a paltry⁷¹ ring
 That she did give me, whose poesy⁷² was
 For all the world like cutlers'⁷³ poetry
 Upon a knife: "love me, and leave me not."

Nerissa What talk you of the poesy or the value? 150
 You swore to me when I did give it you
 That you would wear it till the hour of death,
 And that it should lie with you in your grave.

65 good sense, reason

66 put in jail

67 discharged (1) of debt/offense, (2) from jail

68 breath-taxing ("merely verbal")

69 gelded, castrated

70 circular band

71 petty, insignificant

72 brief inscription, engraved motto

73 dealers in/makers of knives

Though not for me,⁷⁴ yet for your vehement oaths
 155 You should have been respective⁷⁵ and have kept it.
 Gave it a⁷⁶ judge's clerk! But well I know
 The clerk will ne'er wear hair on's face that had it.

Gratiano He will, and if he live to be a man.

Nerissa Aye, if a woman live to be a man.

160 *Gratiano* Now by this hand I gave it to a youth,
 A kind of boy, a little scrubbèd⁷⁷ boy
 No higher then thyself, the judge's clerk,
 A prating⁷⁸ boy that begged it as a fee.
 I could not for my heart deny it him.

165 *Portia* You were to blame, I must be plain with you,
 To part so slightly⁷⁹ with your wife's first gift,
 A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger,
 And so riveted with faith unto your flesh.
 I gave my love a ring, and made him swear
 170 Never to part with it, and here he stands.
 I dare be sworn for him, he would not leave it,
 Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth
 That the world masters. Now in faith, Gratiano,
 You give your wife too unkind a cause of grief,
 175 And 'twere to⁸⁰ me I should be mad at it.

Bassanio (*aside*) Why, I were best to cut my left hand off,
 And swear I lost the ring defending it.

74 for me = on my account

75 considerate, regardful, careful

76 to a

77 small, insignificant

78 chattering

79 carelessly, indifferently, easily

80 'twere to = if it were

Gratiano My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away
 Unto the judge that begged it, and indeed
 Deserved⁸¹ it too. And then the boy his clerk, 180
 That took some pains in writing, he begged mine,
 And neither man nor master would take aught
 But the two rings.

Portia What ring gave you, my lord?
 Not that I hope which you received of me.

Bassanio If I could add a lie unto a fault, 185
 I would deny it. But you see my finger
 Hath not the ring upon it, it is gone.

Portia Even so void is your false heart of truth.
 By heaven I will ne'er come in your bed
 Until I see the ring. 190

Nerissa (to *Gratiano*) Nor I in yours, till I again see mine.

Bassanio Sweet Portia,
 If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
 If you did know for whom I gave the ring,
 And would conceive⁸² for what I gave the ring, 195
 And how unwillingly I left the ring,
 When naught would be accepted but the ring,
 You would abate the strength of your displeasure!

Portia If you had known the virtue of the ring,
 Or half her worthiness that gave the ring, 200
 Or your own honor⁸³ to contain⁸⁴ the ring,
 You would not then have parted with the ring.

81 who deserved

82 think, imagine

83 allegiance, word of honor, conscience

84 hold, keep

What man is there so much unreasonable,
 If you had pleased to have defended it
 205 With any terms of zeal,⁸⁵ wanted⁸⁶ the modesty
 To urge⁸⁷ the thing held⁸⁸ as a ceremony?⁸⁹
 Nerissa teaches me what to believe.
 I'll die for't,⁹⁰ but some woman had the ring!

Bassanio No, by mine honor, madam, by my soul
 210 No woman had it, but a civil⁹¹ doctor,
 Which did refuse three thousand ducats of⁹² me,
 And begged the ring, the which I did deny him,
 And suffered him to go⁹³ displeased away,
 Even he that had held up⁹⁴ the very life
 215 Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?
 I was enforced to send it after him.
 I was beset⁹⁵ with shame and courtesy,
 My honor would not let ingratitude
 So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady,
 220 And by these blessed candles of the night,⁹⁶
 Had you been there, I think you would have begged
 The ring of⁹⁷ me, to give the worthy doctor!

85 fervor, devotion

86 or would have lacked

87 urge that

88 be kept

89 solemnity, something sacred

90 die for't = bet my life on it

91 (1) secular (as opposed to religious), (2) legal (as opposed to medical)

92 from

93 suffered him to go = submitted to/allowed/tolerated his going

94 held up = preserved, sustained, supported

95 surrounded, besieged, assailed

96 i.e., the stars

97 from

- Portia* Let not that doctor e'er come near my house,
 Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,
 And that which you did swear to keep for me. 225
 I will become as liberal as you,
 I'll not deny him any thing I have,
 No, not my body, nor my husband's bed.
 Know⁹⁸ him I shall, I am well sure of it.
 Lie not a night from⁹⁹ home. Watch me like Argos!¹⁰⁰ 230
 If you do not, if I be left alone,
 Now by mine honor (which is yet mine own),
 I'll have the doctor for my bedfellow.
- Nerissa* And I his clerk. Therefore be well advised
 How you do leave me to mine own protection.¹⁰¹ 235
- Gratiano* Well, do you so. Let not me take¹⁰² him then,
 For if I do, I'll mar the young clerk's pen.¹⁰³
- Antonio* I am th' unhappy subject of these quarrels.
- Portia* Sir, grieve not you, you are welcome notwithstanding.
- Bassanio* Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong, 240
 And in the hearing of these many friends
 I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes
 Wherein I see myself.
- Portia* Mark you but that?
 In both my eyes he doubly sees himself!
 In each eye one, swear by your double self, 245

98 (1) be acquainted with, (2) have carnal/sexual knowledge of

99 away from

100 shepherd with eyes all over his body

101 to mine own protection = to protect myself

102 catch

103 penis

And there's an oath of credit.¹⁰⁴

Bassanio

Nay, but hear me.

Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear

I never more will break an oath with thee.

Antonio I once did lend my body for thy wealth,

250 Which but for him that had your husband's ring

Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,

My soul¹⁰⁵ upon the forfeit, that your lord

Will never more break faith advisedly.¹⁰⁶

Portia Then you shall be his surety. (*hands him the ring*) Give him this,

255 And bid him keep it better than the other.

Antonio Here, Lord Bassanio, swear to keep this ring.

Bassanio By heaven it is the same I gave the doctor!

Portia I had it of him. Pardon, Bassanio,

For by this ring the doctor lay with me.

260 *Nerissa* And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano,

For that same scrubbèd boy, the doctor's clerk,

In lieu of this last night did lie with me.

Gratiano Why this is like the mending of highways

In summer, where the ways are fair¹⁰⁷ enough.

265 What, are we cuckolds¹⁰⁸ ere we have deserved it?

Portia Speak not so grossly,¹⁰⁹ you are all amazed.¹¹⁰

Here is a letter, read it at your leisure,

104 of credit = to be believed

105 i.e., that which is infinitely more valuable than his body

106 knowingly, intentionally

107 reputable, good

108 the deceived husbands of unfaithful wives

109 excessively

110 bewildered, confused

It comes from Padua,¹¹¹ from Belario.
 There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,
 Nerissa there her clerk. Lorenzo here 270
 Shall witness I set forth as soon as you,
 And but e'en now returned. I have not yet
 Entered my house. Antonio, you are welcome,
 And I have better news in store for you
 Than you expect. Unseal this letter soon, 275
 There you shall find¹¹² three of your argosies
 Are richly¹¹³ come to harbor suddenly.¹¹⁴
 You shall not know by what strange accident
 I chancèd on this letter.

Antonio I am dumb.
Bassanio Were you the doctor, and I knew you not? 280
Gratiano Were you the clerk that is to make me cuckold?
Nerissa Aye, but the clerk that never means to do it –
 Unless he live until he be a man.
Bassanio Sweet doctor, you shall be my bedfellow.
 When I am absent, then lie with my wife. 285
Antonio Sweet lady, you have given me life and living,
 For here I read for certain that my ships
 Are safely come to road.¹¹⁵

Portia How now, Lorenzo?
 My clerk hath some good comforts,¹¹⁶ too, for you.
Nerissa Aye, and I'll give them him without a fee. 290

111 PAdyooAH

112 learn/discover that

113 splendidly, wealthily

114 unexpectedly

115 sheltered water near a harbor

116 pleasures, delights

There do I give to you and Jessica,
From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,
After his death, of all he dies possessed of.

Lorenzo Fair ladies, you drop manna¹¹⁷ in the way
Of starvèd people.

295 *Portia* It is almost morning,
And yet I am sure you are not satisfied
Of these events at full.¹¹⁸ Let us go in,
And charge us¹¹⁹ there upon interrogatories,¹²⁰
And we will answer all things faithfully.

300 *Gratiano* Let it be so. The first interrogatory
That my Nerissa shall be sworn on is
Whether till the next night she had rather stay,¹²¹
Or go to bed, now being two hours to¹²² day.
But were the day come, I should wish it dark,
305 Till I were couching¹²³ with the doctor's clerk.¹²⁴
Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing
So sore,¹²⁵ as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.¹²⁶

EXEUNT

117 food dropped from heaven, to feed the starving Israelites after they left

Egypt and were in the barren desert (Exod. 16)

118 at full = completely

119 charge us = put us on oath, as in a courtroom

120 formal questioning

121 wait

122 till

123 lying down (in bed)

124 "clerk" in British English is to this day pronounced "clark"

125 seriously

126 bawdy pun on female genitalia

AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM



Shylock is to the world of the comedies and romances what Hamlet is to the tragedies, and Falstaff to the histories: a representation so original as to be perpetually bewildering to us. What is beyond us in Hamlet and Falstaff is a mode of vast consciousness crossed by wit, so that we know authentic disinterestedness only by knowing the Hamlet of act 5, and know the wit that enlarges existence best by knowing Falstaff before his rejection by King Henry V, who has replaced Hal. Shylock is not beyond us in any way, and yet he resembles Hamlet and Falstaff in one crucial regard: he is a much more problematical representation than even Shakespeare's art could have intended. Like Hamlet and Falstaff, he dwarfs his fellow characters. Portia, despite her aura, fades before him just as Claudius recedes in the clash of might opposites with Hamlet, and as Hotspur is dimmed by Falstaff.

I know of no legitimate way in which *The Merchant of Venice* ought to be regarded as other than an anti-Semitic text, agreeing in this with E. E. Stoll as against Harold Goddard, my favorite critic of Shakespeare. Goddard sees Antonio and Portia as self-betrayers, who should have done better. They seem to me per-

factly adequate Christians, with Antonio's anti-Semitism being rather less judicious than Portia's, whose attitude approximates that of the T. S. Eliot of *After Strange Gods, The Idea of a Christian Society*, and the earlier poems. If you accept the attitude towards the Jews of the Gospel of John, then you will behave towards Shylock as Portia does, or as Eliot doubtless would have behaved towards British Jewry, had the Nazis defeated and occupied Eliot's adopted country. To Portia, and to Eliot, the Jews were what they are called in the Gospel of John: descendants of Satan, rather than of Abraham.

There is no real reason to doubt that the historical Shakespeare would have agreed with his Portia. Shakespeare after all wrote what might as well be called *The Jew of Venice*, in clear rivalry with his precursor Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. Were I an actor, I would take great pleasure in the part of Barabas, and little or none in that of Shylock, but then I am a Jewish critic, and prefer the exuberance of Barabas to the wounded intensity of Shylock. There is nothing problematic about Barabas. We cannot imagine *him* asking: "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" any more than we can imagine Shylock proclaiming: "As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights . . . and poison wells." Marlowe, subtly blasphemous and cunningly outrageous, gives us Christians and Muslims who are as reprehensible as Barabas, but who lack the Jew of Malta's superb delight in his own sublime villainy. Despite his moralizing scholars, Marlowe the poet is Barabas, or rhetorically so akin to his creation as to render the difference uninteresting. Shakespeare possibly intended to give us a pathetic monster in Shylock, but being Shakespeare, he gave us Shylock, concerning whom little can be said that will not be at least oxymoronic, if not indeed self-contradictory.

That Shylock got away from Shakespeare seems clear enough, but that is the scandal of Shakespearean representation; so strong is it that nearly all his creatures break out of the temporal trap of Elizabethan and Jacobean mimesis, and establish standards of imitation that do seem to be, not of an age, but for all time. Shylock also—like Hamlet, Falstaff, Cleopatra—compels us to see differences in reality we otherwise could not have seen. Marlowe is a great caricaturist; Barabas is grotesquely magnificent, and his extravagance mocks the Christian cartoon of the Jew as usurer and fiend. It hardly matters whether the mockery is involuntary, since inevitably the hyperbolic force of the Marlovian rhetoric raises word-consciousness to a level where everything joins in an overreaching. In a cosmos where all is excessive, Barabas is no more a Jew than Tamburlaine is a Scythian or Faustus a Christian. It is much more troublesome to ask, Is Shylock a Jew? Does he not now represent something our culture regards as being essentially Jewish? So immense is the power of Shakespearean mimesis that its capacity for harm necessarily might be as substantial as its enabling force has been for augmenting cognition and for fostering psychoanalysis, despite all Freud's anxious assertions of his own originality.

Harold Goddard, nobly creating a Shakespeare in his own highly humane image, tried to persuade himself "that Shakespeare planned his play from the outset to enforce the irony of Portia's failure to be true to her inner self in the trial scene." E. E. Stoll, sensibly declaring that Shakespeare's contemporary audience set societal limits that Shakespeare himself would not have thought to transcend, reminds us that Jew-baiting was in effect little different from bear-baiting for that audience. I do not hope for a better

critic of Shakespeare than Goddard. Like Freud, Goddard always looked for what Shakespeare shared with Dostoevsky, which seems to me rather more useful than searching for what Shakespeare shared with Kyd or even with Marlowe or Webster. Despite his authentic insistence that Shakespeare always was poet as well as playwright, Goddard's attempt to see *The Merchant of Venice* as other than anti-Semitic was misguided.

At his very best, Goddard antithetically demonstrates that the play's "spiritual argument" is quite simply unacceptable to us now:

Shylock's conviction that Christianity and revenge are synonyms is confirmed. "If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge." The unforgettable speech from which that comes, together with Portia's on mercy, and Lorenzo's on the harmony of heaven, make up the spiritual argument of the play. Shylock asserts that a Jew is a man. Portia declares that man's duty to man is mercy—which comes from heaven. Lorenzo points to heaven but laments that the materialism of life insulates man from its harmonies. A celestial syllogism that puts to shame the logic of the courtroom.

Alas, the celestial syllogism is Goddard's, and Portia's logic is Shakespeare's. Goddard wanted to associate *The Merchant of Venice* with Chekhov's bittersweet "Rothschild's Fiddle," but Dostoevsky again would have been the right comparison. Shakespeare's indubitable anti-Semitism is no lovelier than Dostoevsky's, being compounded similarly out of xenophobia and the Gospel of John. Shylock's demand for justice, as contrasted to Portia's supposed mercy, is part of the endless consequence of the New Testa-

ment's slander against the Pharisees. But the authors of the New Testament, even Paul and John, were no match for the authors of the Hebrew Bible. Shakespeare, more even than Dostoevsky, is of another order, the order of the Yahwist, Homer, Dante, Chaucer, Cervantes, Tolstoy—the great masters of Western literary representation. Shylock is essentially a comic representation rendered something other than comic because of Shakespeare's preternatural ability to accomplish a super-mimesis of essential nature. Shakespeare's intellectual, Hamlet, is necessarily the paradigm of *the* intellectual, even as Falstaff is the model of wit, and Cleopatra the sublime of eros. Is Shakespeare's Jew fated to go on being the representation of *the* Jew?

"Yes and no," would be my answer, because of Shakespeare's own partial failure when he allows Shylock to invoke an even stronger representation of *the* Jew, the Yahwist's vision of the superbly tenacious Jacob tending the flocks of Laban and not directly taking interest. Something very odd is at work when Antonio denies Jacob's own efficacy:

This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for,
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven.

(1.3.85–87)

That is certainly a Christian reading, though I do not assert necessarily it was Shakespeare's own. Good Christian merchant that he is, Antonio distinguishes his own profits from Shylock's Jewish usury, but Shylock, or rather the Yahwist, surely wins the point over Antonio, and perhaps over Shakespeare. If the Jewish "divel can cite Scripture for his purpose," so can the Christian devils, from John through Shakespeare, and the polemical point

turns upon who wins the agon, the Yahwist or Shakespeare? Shakespeare certainly intended to show the Jew as caught in the repetition of a revenge morality masking itself as a demand for justice. That is the rhetorical force of Shylock's obsessive "I will have my bond," with all its dreadfully compulsive ironic plays upon "bond." But if Shylock, like the Yahwist's Jacob, is a strong representation of the Jew, then "bond" has a tenacity that Shakespeare himself may have underestimated. Shakespeare's most dubious irony, as little persuasive as the resolution of *Measure for Measure*, is that Portia triumphantly out-literalizes Shylock's literalism, since flesh cannot be separated from blood. But Shylock, however monstrously, has a true bond or covenant to assert, whether between himself and Antonio, or between Jacob and Laban, or ultimately between Israel and Antonio, or between Jacob and Laban, or ultimately between Israel and Yahweh. Portia invokes an unequal law, not a covenant or mutual obligation, but only another variant upon the age-old Christian insistence that Christians may shed Jewish blood, but never the reverse. Can it be said that we do not go on hearing Shylock's "I will have my bond," despite his forced conversion?

Shakespearean representation presents us with many perplexities throughout the comedies and romances: Angelo and Malvolio, among others, are perhaps as baffling as Shylock. What makes Shylock different may be a strength in the language he speaks that works against what elsewhere is Shakespeare's most original power. Shylock does not change by listening to himself speaking; he becomes only more what he always was. It is as though the Jew alone, in Shakespeare, lacks originality. Marlowe's Barabas *sounds* less original than Shylock does, and yet Marlowe employs Barabas

to satirize Christian moral pretensions. The curious result is that Marlowe, just this once, seems "modern" in contrast to Shakespeare. What are we to do with Shylock's great outbursts of pathos when the play itself seems to give them no dignity or value in context? I do not find it possible to contravene E. E. Stoll's judgment in this regard:

Shylock's disappointment is tragic to him, but good care is taken that it shall not be to us. . . . The running fire assails him to the very moment—and beyond it—that Shylock says he is not well, and staggers out, amid Gratiano's jeers touching his baptism, to provoke in the audience the laughter of triumph and vengeance in his own day and bring tears to their eyes in ours. How can we here for a moment sympathize with Shylock unless at the same time we indignantly turn, not only against Gratiano, but against Portia, the Duke, and all Venice as well?

We cannot, unless we desire to read or see some other play. *The Merchant of Venice* demands what we cannot accept: Antonio's superior goodness, from the start, is to be demonstrated by his righteous scorn for Shylock, which is to say, Antonio most certainly represents what now is called a Jew-baiter. An honest production of the play, sensitive to its values, would now be intolerable in a Western country. The unhappy paradox is that *The Jew of Malta*, a ferocious farce, exposes the madness and hypocrisy of Jew-baiting, even though its Machiavel, Barabas, is the Jewish monster or Devil incarnate, while *The Merchant of Venice* is at once a comedy of delightful sophistication and a vicious Christian slander against the Jews.

In that one respect, Shakespeare was of an age, and not for all time. Bardolatry is not always an innocent disease, and produces odd judgments, as when J. Middleton Murry insisted: "*The Merchant of Venice* is not a problem play; it is a fairy story." For us, contemporary Jews and Gentiles alike, it had better be a problem play, and not a fairy story. Shylock, Murry admitted, was not "coherent," because a Shakespearean character had no need to be coherent. Yet Shylock is anything but incoherent. His palpable mimetic force enhances his rapacity and viciousness, and works to make an ancient bogeyman come dreadfully alive. For the reader or playgoer (though hardly the latter, in our time), Shylock is at once comic and frightening, a walking embodiment of the death drive.

We must not underestimate the power and influence of Shakespearean mimesis, even when it is *deliberately* unoriginal, as it is in Shylock. Hamlet and Falstaff contain us to our enrichment. Shylock has the strength to contain us to our destruction. Something of the same could be said for Angelo, in *Measure for Measure*, or of Malvolio, in *Twelfth Night*, or of nearly everyone in *Troilus*. History renders Shylock's strength as representation socially destructive, whereas Angelo and Malvolio inhabit the shadows of the individual consciousness. I conclude by noting that Shakespeare's comedies and romances share in the paradox that Gershom Scholem said the writings of Kafka possessed. They have for us "something of the strong light of the canonical, of the perfection that destroys."

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FINDING LIST



Repeated unfamiliar words and meanings, alphabetically arranged, with act, scene, and footnote number of first occurrence, in the spelling (form) of that first occurrence

<i>advantage</i>	1.3.49	<i>cause</i> (noun)	4.1.80
<i>anon</i>	2.2.72	<i>chance</i> (verb)	3.2.105
<i>answer</i> (verb)	3.5.20	<i>charge</i> (noun)	4.1.127
<i>argosies</i>	1.1.8	<i>company</i>	1.1.66
<i>attend</i>	1.1.74	<i>conceit</i>	1.1.100
<i>bankrout</i>	3.1.30	<i>confound</i>	3.2.176
<i>bargains</i>	1.3.33	<i>conveniently</i>	2.8.21
<i>bated</i>	1.3.102	<i>cope</i>	4.1.192
<i>become</i>	2.2.117	<i>course</i> (noun)	3.3.9
<i>beshrew</i>	2.6.41	<i>curbed</i>	1.2.27
<i>bestow</i>	2.2.81	<i>dam</i>	3.1.21
<i>bids</i> (verb)	2.2.7	<i>delivered</i>	3.3.7
<i>bond</i>	1.3.15	<i>deny</i>	2.2.113
<i>by</i> (adverb)	2.5.29	<i>doubt, out of:</i>	
<i>carrion</i>	2.7.41	<i>see under</i>	
<i>casket</i>	1.2.83	<i>out of doubt</i>	

FINDING LIST

<i>draw</i>	2.7.1	<i>humors</i>	3.5.40
<i>ducats</i>	1.3.1	<i>i'faith</i>	1.1.109
<i>employ</i>	2.8.20	<i>impeach</i>	3.2.178
<i>enforcèd</i>	3.2.14	<i>infidel</i>	3.2.153
<i>enow</i>	3.5.9	<i>infuse</i>	4.1.63
<i>envious</i>	3.2.182	<i>knave</i>	1.3.136
<i>ere</i>	1.1.120	<i>leave (noun)</i>	2.4.9
<i>estate</i>	1.1.55	<i>liberal</i>	2.2.120
<i>estimation</i>	2.7.14	<i>liver</i>	1.1.86
<i>even now</i>	1.1.49	<i>liveries</i>	2.2.68
<i>ever</i>	1.2.30	<i>look to</i>	2.5.11
<i>exact (verb)</i>	1.3.10	<i>love</i>	1.1.93
<i>exeunt</i>	1.1.75	<i>maid</i>	1.1.113
<i>fair</i>	1.1.164	<i>main flood</i>	4.1.36
<i>fall (noun)</i>	1.2.80	<i>mark</i>	1.3.57
<i>faith: see under</i>		<i>marry</i>	
<i>i'faith</i>		(exclamation)	2.2.30
<i>flourish</i>	2.1.1	<i>meet (adjective)</i>	3.5.51
<i>follow</i>	4.1.31	<i>mere</i>	3.2.169
<i>force</i>	2.9.16	<i>narrow seas</i>	2.8.11
<i>fortune</i>	1.1.53	<i>naughty</i>	3.2.8
<i>Fortune</i>		<i>ne'er</i>	1.2.36
(goddess)	2.2.103	<i>obtained</i>	1.2.99
<i>furnish</i>	1.1.181	<i>office</i>	2.6.33
<i>gentle</i>	1.1.46	<i>ostent</i>	2.2.133
<i>graces</i>	2.7.16	<i>out of doubt</i>	1.1.32
<i>hard</i>	1.2.29	<i>pain</i>	2.2.121
<i>hazard</i>	1.1.154	<i>parts (noun)</i>	1.2.43
<i>hie (verb)</i>	1.3.137	<i>plea</i>	3.2.48
<i>honest</i>	2.2.5	<i>post (noun)</i>	2.9.65

FINDING LIST

<i>presages</i>	1.1.173	<i>surfeit</i>	1.2.5
<i>present</i>	1.1.177	<i>swayed</i>	1.3.76
<i>prodigal</i>	1.1.132	<i>tarry</i>	3.2.1
<i>quality</i>	3.2.2	<i>tediousness</i>	2.3.2
<i>question</i> (verb)	4.1.35	<i>terms</i>	2.2.49
<i>rated</i>	2.7.13	<i>thrift</i>	1.1.174
<i>rende</i>	13.2.58	<i>thrive</i>	1.3.74
<i>royal</i>	3.2.158	<i>true</i>	2.6.42
<i>ruled</i>	2.2.16	<i>try</i>	1.1.179
<i>scroll</i> (noun)	2.7.42	<i>upright</i>	3.5.52
<i>sealed</i>	1.2.77	<i>usance</i>	1.3.26
<i>seasoned</i>	3.2.49	<i>use</i>	1.3.50
<i>sensible</i>	2.8.24	<i>uttermost</i>	1.1.160
<i>show</i> (noun)	1.2.69	<i>varnished</i>	2.5.23
<i>signify</i>	2.9.56	<i>venture</i>	1.1.22
<i>sirrah</i>	1.2.108	<i>very</i>	1.2.102
<i>soft</i> (verb)	1.3.40	<i>vilely</i>	1.2.79
<i>stayed</i>	1.1.67	<i>vinegar aspect</i>	1.1.63
<i>stomachs</i>	3.5.30	<i>void</i>	4.1.1
<i>stood</i> : see under		<i>wanton</i>	3.2.63
<i>stayed</i>		<i>way</i>	2.2.23
<i>straight</i>	1.1.45	<i>wit</i>	2.1.20
<i>suit</i> (noun)	1.2.93	<i>wracked</i>	3.1.3
<i>surety</i>	1.2.76		