

some have seen a close resemblance between Shylock's argument in the trial scene as to the treatment of slaves and the argument of a Jew contained in Silvain's *Orator*, which was published in 1596. But the differences are at least as striking as the resemblance.

In manner, *The Merchant of Venice* is near akin to *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. With these plays of Shakespeare's 'middle' period, it has much more in common than with the earlier comedies mentioned along with it by Francis Meres. This is particularly conspicuous in the free employment of prose, even in scenes of serious interest, and in the easy and varied rhythm of the verse. We ought not perhaps to make much of the fact that it is the *last* in Meres' list. But on general grounds it seems safe to believe that *The Merchant of Venice* was written only a short time before the *Palladis Tamia* appeared, and that 1597 is therefore its probable date.

THE MERCHANT  
OF  
VENICE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

The DUKE OF VENICE.  
 The PRINCE OF MOROCCO, } suitors to Portia.  
 The PRINCE OF ARRAGON, }  
 ANTONIO, a merchant of Venice.  
 BASSANIO, his friend, suitor likewise to Portia.  
 SALANIO, }  
 SALARINO, } friends to Antonio and Bassanio.  
 GRATIANO, }  
 LORENZO, in love with Jessica.  
 SHYLOCK, a rich Jew.  
 TUBAL, a Jew, his friend.  
 LAUNCELOT GOBBO, the clown, servant to Shylock.  
 OLD GOBBO, father to Launcelot.  
 LEONARDO, servant to Bassanio.  
 BALTHASAR, }  
 STEPHANO, } servants to Portia.

PORTIA, a rich heiress.  
 NERISSA, her waiting-maid.  
 JESSICA, daughter to Shylock.

Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice, Gaoler,  
 Servants to Portia, and other Attendants.

SCENE: Partly at Venice, and partly at Belmont, the seat of Portia,  
 on the Continent.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ACT I.

SCENE I. Venice. A street.

Enter ANTONIO, SALARINO, and SALANIO.

*Ant.* In sooth, 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 stuff 't is made of, whereof it is born,  
 I am to learn;

And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,  
 That I have much ado to know myself.

*Salar.* 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. 10

*Salan.* Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth,  
 The better part of my affections would  
 Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still  
 Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind,  
 Peering in maps for ports and piers and roads;  
 And every object that might make me fear  
 Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt  
 Would make me sad. 20

*Salar.* My wind cooling my broth  
 Would blow me to an ague, when I thought  
 What harm a wind too great at sea might do.  
 I should not see the sandy hour-glass run,  
 But I should think of shallows and of flats,  
 And see my wealthy Andrew dock'd in sand,  
 Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs

To kiss her burial. Should I go to church  
 And see the holy edifice of stone, 30  
 And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,  
 Which touching but my gerile vessel's side,  
 Would scatter all her spices on the stream,  
 Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,  
 And, in a word, but even now worth this,  
 And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought  
 To think on this, and shall I lack the thought  
 That such a thing bechanced would make me sad?  
 But tell not me; I know, Antonio  
 Is sad to think upon his merchandise. 40  
*Ant.* Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,  
 My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,  
 Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate  
 Upon the fortune of this present year:  
 Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.  
*Salar.* Why, then you are in love.  
*Ant.* Fie, fie!  
*Salar.* Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad,  
 Because you are not merry: and 't were as easy  
 For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry,  
 Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus, 50  
 Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:  
 Some that will evermore peep through their eyes  
 And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper,  
 And other of such vinegar aspect  
 That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile,  
 Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

*Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO.*

*Salar.* Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,  
 Gratiano and Lorenzo. Fare ye well:  
 We leave you now with better company.

*Salar.* I would have stay'd till I had made you merry, 60  
 If worthier friends had not prevented me.

*Ant.* Your worth is very dear in my regard.  
 I take it, your own business calls on you  
 And you embrace the occasion to depart.

*Salar.* Good morrow, my good lords.

*Bass.* Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? say, when?  
 You grow exceeding strange: must it be so?

*Salar.* We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.

[*Exeunt Salarino and Salanio.*]

*Lor.* My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio.

We two will leave you: but at dinner-time,  
 I pray you, have in mind where we must meet. 70

*Bass.* I will not fail you.

*Gra.* You look not well, Signior Antonio;  
 You have too much respect upon the world:  
 They lose it that do buy it with much care:  
 Believe me, you are marvellously changed.

*Ant.* I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;  
 A stage where every man must play a part,  
 And mine a sad one.

*Gra.* Let me play the fool:

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,  
 And let my liver rather heat with wine  
 Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.  
 Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,  
 Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?  
 Sleep when he wakes and creep into the jaundice  
 By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio—  
 I love thee, and it is my love that speaks—

There are a sort of men whose visages  
 Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,  
 And do a wilful stillness entertain, 80

With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion  
 Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,  
 As who should say 'I am Sir 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  
 For saying nothing, when, I am very sure,  
 If they should speak, would almost damn those ears  
 Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.  
 I'll tell thee more of this another time;

But fish not, with this melancholy bait, 100  
 For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.  
 Come, good Lorenzo. Fare ye well awhile:  
 I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

*Lor.* Well, we will leave you then till dinner-time:  
 I must be one of these same dumb wise men,  
 For Gratiano never lets me speak.

*Gra.* Well, keep me company but two years moe,  
 Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

*Ant.* Farewell: I'll grow a talker for this gear. 110  
*Gra.* Thanks, i' faith, for silence is only commendable  
 In a neat's tongue dried. [*Exeunt Gratiano and Lorenzo.*]

*Ant.* Is that any thing now?

*Bass.* Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.

*Ant.* Well, tell me now what lady is the same  
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage, 120  
That you to-day promised to tell me of?

*Bass.* 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,  
How much I have disabled mine estate,  
By something showing a more swelling port  
Than my faint means would grant continuance:  
Nor do I now make moan to be abridged  
From such a noble rate; but my chief care  
Is to come fairly off from the great debts  
Wherein my time something too prodigal  
Hath left me gaged. To you, Antonio, 130  
I owe the most, in money and in love,  
And from your love I have a warranty  
To unburden all my plots and purposes  
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

*Ant.* I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;  
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,  
Within the eye of honour, be assured,  
My purse, my person, my extremest means,  
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

*Bass.* In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft, 140  
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight  
The self-same way with more advised watch,  
To find the other forth, and by adventuring both  
I oft found both: I urge this childhood proof,  
Because what follows is pure innocence.  
I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,  
That which I owe is lost; but if you please  
To shoot another arrow that self way  
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,  
As I will watch the aim, or to find both 150  
Or bring your latter hazard back again  
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

*Ant.* You know me well, and herein spend but time  
To wind about my love with circumstance;  
And out of doubt you do me now more wrong  
In making question of my uttermost  
Than if you had made waste of all I have:  
Then do but say to me what I should do

That in your knowledge may by me be done,  
And I am prest unto it: therefore, speak. 160

*Bass.* In Belmont is a lady richly left;  
And she is fair and, fairer than that word,  
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes  
I did receive fair speechless messages:  
Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued  
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:  
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,  
For the four winds blow in from every coast  
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks  
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;  
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchus' strand, 170  
And many Jasons come in quest of her.  
O my Antonio, had I but the means  
To hold a rival place with one of them,  
I have a mind presages me such thrift,  
That I should questionless be fortunate!

*Ant.* Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;  
Neither have I money nor commodity  
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;  
Try what my credit can in Venice do: 180  
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,  
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.  
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,  
Where money is, and I no question make  
To have it of my trust or for my sake. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.

*Por.* By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is weary of this great world.

*Ner.* You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness therefore, to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

*Por.* Good sentences and well pronounced.

*Ner.* They would be better, if well followed. 10

*Por.* If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own

instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion 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 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? 24

*Ner.* Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations: therefore the lottery, that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

*Por.* I pray thee, over-name them; and as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, level at my affection. 34

*Ner.* First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

*Por.* Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself.

*Ner.* Then there is the County Palatine.

*Por.* He doth nothing but frown, as who should say 'If you will not have me, choose': he hears merry tales and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two! 46

*Ner.* How say you by the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

*Por.* God made him, 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 Palatine; he is every man in no man; if a throstle sing, he falls straight a capering: he will fence with his own shadow: if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me, I would forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him. 56

*Ner.* What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

*Por.* You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany and his behaviour every where. 66

*Ner.* What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbour?

*Por.* That he hath a neighbourly charity in him, for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety and sealed under for another.

*Ner.* How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew? 73

*Por.* Very vilely 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 better than a beast: an the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

*Ner.* If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him. 81

*Por.* Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of rhenish wine on the contrary casket, for if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do any thing, Nerissa, ere I'll be married to a sponge.

*Ner.* You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition depending on the caskets.

*Por.* If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of woers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure. 96

*Ner.* 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 Montferrat?

*Por.* Yes, yes, it was Bassanio; as I think, he was so called.

*Ner.* True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

*Por.* I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise. 105

*Enter a Serving-man.*

How now! what news?

*Serv.* The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave: and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the prince his master will be here to-night. 110

*Por.* If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a 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 devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me.

Come, Nerissa. Sirrah, go before.

Whiles we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door. [Exeunt.]

*start*  
SCENE III. Venice. A public place.

*Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK.*

*Shy.* Three thousand ducats; well.

*Bass.* Ay, sir, for three months.

*Shy.* For three months; well.

*Bass.* For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

*Shy.* Antonio shall become bound; well.

*Bass.* May you stead me? will you pleasure me? shall I know your answer?

*Shy.* Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

*Bass.* Your answer to that. 10

*Shy.* Antonio is a good man.

*Bass.* Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

*Shy.* Oh, no, no, no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men: there be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves, I mean pirates, and then there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats; I think I may take his bond. 23

*Bass.* Be assured you may.

*Shy.* I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

*Bass.* If it please you to dine with us.

*Shy.* Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here? 33

*Enter ANTONIO.*

*Bass.* This is Signior Antonio.

*Shy.* [Aside] How like a fawning publican he looks! I hate him for he is a Christian, But more for that in low simplicity He lends out money gratis and brings down The rate of usance here with us in Venice. If I can catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him. He hates our sacred nation, and he rails, Even there where merchants most do congregate, On me, my bargains and my well-won thrift, Which he calls interest. Cursed by my tribe, If I forgive him! 40

*Bass.* Shylock, do you hear?

*Shy.* I am debating of my present store, And, by the near guess of my memory, I cannot instantly raise up the gross Of full three thousand ducats. What of that? 50

Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe, Will furnish me. But soft! how many months Do you desire? [To *Ant.*] Rest you fair, good signior; Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

*Ant.* Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow By taking nor by giving of excess, Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend, I'll break a custom. Is he yet possess'd How much ye would? *staded*  
*Met*

*Shy.* Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

*Ant.* And for three months. 60

*Shy.* I had forgot; three months; you told me so. Well then, your bond; and let me see; but hear you; Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow Upon advantage.

*Ant.* I do never use it.

*Shy.* When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep—  
This Jacob from our holy Abram was,  
As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,  
The third possessor; ay, he was the third—

*Ant.* And what of him? did he take interest?

*Shy.* No, not take interest, not, as you would say, 70  
Directly interest; mark what Jacob did.

When Laban and himself were compromised  
That all the eanlings which were streaked and pied  
Should fall as Jacob's hire,

The skilful shepherd pilled me certain wands  
And stuck them up before the fulsome ewes,  
Who, then conceiving, did in eaning time  
Fall party-coloured lambs, and those were Jacob's.  
This was a way to thrive, and he was blest;  
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not. 80

*Ant.* This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for;  
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,  
But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven.  
Was this inserted to make interest good?  
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

*Shy.* I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast:

But note me, signior.

*Ant.* Mark you this, Bassanio,  
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.

An evil soul producing holy witness 90  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,  
A goodly apple rotten at the heart:  
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

*Shy.* Three thousand ducats; 't is a good round sum.  
Three months from twelve; then, let me see; the rate—

*Ant.* Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

*Shy.* Signior Antonio, many a time and oft  
In the Rialto you have rated me  
About my money and my usances: 100  
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,  
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe,  
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,  
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,  
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 moneys': you say so;  
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard

And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur  
Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.  
What should I say to you? Should I not say 110  
'Hath a dog money? is it possible  
A cur can 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 spit on me on Wednesday last;  
You spurn'd me such a day; another time  
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies  
I'll lend you thus much moneys?'

*Ant.* I am as like to call thee so again, 120  
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.  
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not  
As to thy friends; for when did friendship take  
A breed for barren metal of his friend?  
But lend it rather to thine enemy,  
Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face  
Exact the penalty.

*Shy.* Why, look you, how you storm!  
I would be friends with you and have your love,  
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,  
Supply your present wants and take no doit 130  
Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me:  
This is kind I offer.

*Bass.* This were kindness.

*Shy.* This kindness will I show.

Go with me to a notary, seal me there  
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,  
If you repay me not on such a day,  
In such a place, such sum or sums as are  
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me. 140

*Ant.* Content, 'faith: I'll seal to such a bond  
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

*Bass.* You shall not seal to such a bond for me:  
I'll rather dwell in my necessity.

*Ant.* Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it:  
Within these two months, that's a month before  
This bond expires, I do expect return  
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

*Shy.* O father Abram, what these Christians are,

*start*

*Aspt*

Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect  
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, profitable neither,  
As flesh of mutttons, beefs, or goats. I say,  
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship:  
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;

And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.  
*Ant.* Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

*Shy.* Then meet me forthwith at the notary's;  
Give him direction for this merry bond,  
And I will go and purse the ducats straight,  
See to my house, left in the fearful guard  
Of an unthrifty knave, and presently  
I will be with you.

*Ant.* Hie thee, gentle Jew. [Exit Shylock.  
The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

*Bass.* I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

*Ant.* Come on: in this there can be no dismay;  
My ships come home a month before the day. [Exeunt. 170

## ACT II.

## SCENE I. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.

Flourish of cornets. Enter the PRINCE OF MOROCCO and  
his train; PORTIA, NERISSA, and others attending.

*Mor.* Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,  
To whom I am a neighbour and near bred.  
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,  
Where Phœbus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,  
And let us make incision for your love,  
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.  
I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine  
Hath fear'd the valiant: by my love, I swear  
The best-regarded virgins of our clime  
Have loved it too: I would not change this hue,  
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

*Por.* In terms of choice I am not solely led

150

160

170

10

By nice direction of a maiden's eyes;  
Besides, the lottery of my destiny  
Bars me the right of voluntary choosing:  
But if my father had not scanted me  
And hedged me by his wit, to yield myself  
His wife who wins me by that means I told you,  
Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair  
As any comer I have look'd on yet  
For my affection.

*Mor.* Even for that I thank you:  
Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets  
To try my fortune. By this scimitar  
That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince  
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,  
I would outstare the sternest eyes that look,  
Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,  
Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,  
Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey,  
To win thee, lady. But, alas the while!  
If Hercules and Lichas play at dice  
Which is the better man, the greater throw  
May turn by fortune from the weaker hand:  
So is Alcides beaten by his page;  
And so may I, blind fortune leading me,  
Miss that which one unworthier may attain,  
And die with grieving.

*Por.* You must take your chance,  
And either not attempt to choose at all  
Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong  
Never to speak to lady afterward  
In way of marriage: therefore be advised.

*Mor.* Nor will not. Come, bring me unto my chance.

*Por.* First, forward to the temple: after dinner  
Your hazard shall be made.

*Mor.* Good fortune then!  
To make me blest or curs'd'st among men.

[Cornets, and exeunt.]

## SCENE II. Venice. A street.

Enter LAUNCELOT.

*Laun.* Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from  
this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts  
me saying to me 'Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot',

(M 330)

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or 'good Gobbo', or 'good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away'. My conscience says 'No; take heed, honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo', or, as aforesaid, 'honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels'. Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: 'Via!' says the fiend; 'away!' says the fiend; 'for the heavens, rouse 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 Launcelot, being an honest man's son', or rather an honest woman's son; for, indeed, my father did something smack, something grow to, he had a kind of taste; well, my conscience says 'Launcelot, budge not'. 'Budge', says the fiend. 'Budge not', says my conscience. 'Conscience', say I, 'you counsel well'; 'Fiend', say I, 'you counsel well': to be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnal; and, in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend; my heels are at your command; I will run. 26

*Enter Old GOBBO, with a basket.*

*Gob.* Master young man, you, I pray you, which is the way to master Jew's?

*Laun.* [*Aside*] O heavens, this is my true-begotten father! who, being more than sand-blind, high-gravel blind, knows me not: I will try confusions with him.

*Gob.* Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is the way to master Jew's?

*Laun.* Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left; marry, at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house. 37

*Gob.* By God's sonties, 't will be a hard way to hit. Can you tell me whether one Launcelot, that dwells with him, dwell with him or no?

*Laun.* Talk you of young Master Launcelot? [*Aside*] Mark me now; now will I raise the waters. Talk you of young Master Launcelot?

*Gob.* No master, sir, but a poor man's son: his father, though I say it, is an honest exceeding poor man and, God be thanked, well to live. 46

*Laun.* Well, let his father be what a' will, we talk of young Master Launcelot.

*Gob.* Your worship's friend and Launcelot, sir.

*Laun.* But I pray you, ergo, old man, ergo, I beseech you, talk you of young Master Launcelot?

*Gob.* Of Launcelot, an't please your mastership. 52

*Laun.* Ergo, Master Launcelot. Talk not of Master Launcelot, father; for the young gentleman, according to Fates and Destinies and such odd sayings, the Sisters Three and such branches of learning, is indeed deceased, or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven.

*Gob.* Marry, God forbid! the boy was the very staff of my age, my very prop. 53

*Laun.* Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-post, a staff or a prop? Do you know me, father? 61

*Gob.* Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman: but, I pray you, tell me, is my boy, God rest his soul, alive or dead?

*Laun.* Do you not know me, father?

*Gob.* Alack, sir, I am sand-blind; I know you not.

*Laun.* Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might 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: truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son may, but at the length truth will out. 71

*Gob.* Pray you, sir, stand up: I am sure you are not Launcelot, my boy.

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

*Gob.* I cannot think you are my son.

*Laun.* I know not what I shall think of that: but I am Launcelot, the Jew's man, and I am sure Margery your wife is my mother. 80

*Gob.* Her name is Margery, indeed: I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood. Lord worshipped might he be! what a beard hast thou got! thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my fill-horse has on his tail.

*Laun.* It should seem, then, that Dobbin's tail grows backward: I am sure he had more hair of his tail than I have of my face when I last saw him.

*Gob.* Lord, how art thou changed! How dost thou and thy master agree? I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now? 91

*Laun.* Well, well: but, for mine own part, as I have set up my rest to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground. My master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come: give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives rare new liveries: if I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground. O rare fortune! here comes the man: to him, father; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer. 101

*Enter BASSANIO, with LEONARDO and other followers.*

*Bass.* You may do so; but let it be so hasted 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 anon to my lodging. [*Exit a Servant.*]

*Laun.* To him, father.

*Gob.* God bless your worship!

*Bass.* Gramercy! wouldst thou aught with me?

*Gob.* Here's my son, sir, a poor boy,—

*Laun.* Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man; that would, sir, as my father shall specify— 111

*Gob.* He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve,—

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

*Gob.* His master and he, saving your worship's reverence, are scarce cater-cousins—

*Laun.* 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 frutify unto you— 120

*Gob.* I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow upon your worship, and my suit is—

*Laun.* In very brief, the suit is impertinent 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.

*Bass.* One speak for both. What would you?

*Laun.* Serve you, sir.

*Gob.* That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

*Bass.* I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit: Shylock thy master spoke with me this day, 130  
And hath preferr'd thee, if it be preferment  
To leave a rich Jew's service, to become  
The follower of so poor a gentleman.

*Laun.* The old proverb is very well parted between my

master Shylock and you, sir: you have the grace of God, sir, and he hath enough.

*Bass.* Thou speak'st it well. Go, father, with thy son.

Take leave of thy old master and inquire

My lodging out. Give him a livery

More guarded than his fellows': see it done. 140

*Laun.* Father, in. I cannot get a service, no; I have ne'er a tongue in my head. Well, if any man in Italy have a fairer table which doth offer to swear upon a book, I shall have good fortune. Go to, here's a simple line of life: here's a small trifle of wives: alas, fifteen wives is nothing! eleven widows and nine maids is a simple coming-in for one man: and then to 'scape drowning thrice, and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather-bed; here are simple scapes. Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear. Father, come; I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye. [*Exeunt Launcelot and Old Gobbo.*]

*Bass.* I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this: 152

These things being bought and orderly bestow'd,

Return in haste, for I do feast to-night

My best-esteem'd acquaintance: hie thee, go.

*Leon.* My best endeavours shall be done herein.

*Enter GRATIANO.*

*Gra.* Where is your master?

*Leon.* Yonder, sir, he walks. [*Exit.*]

*Gra.* Signior Bassanio!

*Bass.* Gratiano!

*Gra.* I have a suit to you.

*Bass.* You have obtain'd it. 160

*Gra.* You must not deny me: I must go with you to Belmont.

*Bass.* Why, then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano;

Thou art too wild, too rude and bold of voice;

Parts that become thee happily enough

And in such eyes as ours appear not faults;

But where thou art not known, why, there they show

Something too liberal. Pray thee, take pain

To allay with some cold drops of modesty

Thy skipping spirit, lest through thy wild behaviour 170

I be misconstrued in the place I go to

And lose my hopes.

*Gra.* Signior Bassanio, hear me:

If I do not put on a sober habit,

Talk with respect and swear but now and then,

Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely,  
Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes  
Thus with my hat, and sigh and say 'amen',  
Use all the observance of civility,  
Like one well studied in a sad ostent  
To please his grandam, never trust me more. 18c

*Bass.* Well, we shall see your bearing.

*Gra.* Nay, but I bar to-night: you shall not gauge me  
By what we do to-night.

*Bass.* No, that were pity:  
I would entreat you rather to put on  
Your boldest-suit of mirth, for we have friends  
That purpose merriment. But fare you well:  
I have some business.

*Gra.* And I must to Lorenzo and the rest:  
But we will visit you at supper-time. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III. *The same. A room in SHYLOCK'S house.*

*Enter JESSICA and LAUNCELOT.*

*Jes.* I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so:  
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,  
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.  
But fare thee well, there is a ducat for thee:  
And, Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see  
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. 9

*Laun.* Adieu! tears exhibit my tongue. Most beautiful  
pagan, most sweet Jew! But, adieu: these foolish drops do  
something drown my manly spirit: adieu.

*Jes.* Farewell, good Launcelot. [Exit Launcelot.]

Alack; what heinous sin is it in me  
To be ashamed to be my father's child!  
But though I am a daughter to his blood,  
I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo,  
If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife,  
Become a Christian and thy loving wife. [Exit.]

SCENE IV. *The same. A street.*

*Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALARINO, and SALANIO.*

*Lor.* Nay, we will slink away in supper-time,  
Disguise us at my lodging and return,  
All in an hour.

*Gra.* We have not made good preparation.

*Salar.* We have not spoke us yet of torch-bearers.

*Salan.* 'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly order'd,  
And better in my mind not undertook.

*Lor.* 'Tis now but four o'clock: we have two hours  
To furnish us.

*Enter LAUNCELOT, with a letter.*

Friend Launcelot, what's the news?

*Laun.* An it shall please you to break up this, it shall seem  
to signify. 11

*Lor.* I know the hand: in faith, 'tis a fair hand;  
And whiter than the paper it writ on  
Is the fair hand that writ.

*Gra.* Love-news, in faith.

*Laun.* By your leave, sir.

*Lor.* Whither goest thou?

*Laun.* Marry, sir, to bid my old master the Jew to sup  
to-night with my new master the Christian.

*Lor.* Hold here, take this: tell gentle Jessica  
I will not fail her; speak it privately. 20  
Go.—Gentlemen, [Exit Launcelot.]

Will you prepare you for this masque to-night?

I am provided of a torch-bearer.

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

*Salan.* And so will I.

*Lor.* Meet me and Gratiano  
At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence.

*Salar.* 'Tis good we do so. [Exeunt Salar. and Salan.]

*Gra.* Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

*Lor.* I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed  
How I shall take her from her father's house, 30  
What gold and jewels she is furnish'd with,  
What page's suit she hath in readiness.  
If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven,  
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake:  
And never dare misfortune cross her foot,  
Unless she do it under this excuse,

That she is issue to a faithless Jew.  
Come, go with me; peruse this as thou goest:  
Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer.

[*Exeunt.*]SCENE V. *The same. Before SHYLOCK'S house.**Enter SHYLOCK and LAUNCELOT.*

*Shy.* Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge,  
The difference of old Shylock and Bassanio:—  
What, Jessica!—thou shalt not gormandise,  
As thou hast done with me:—What, Jessica!—  
And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out;—  
Why, Jessica, I say!

*Laun.* Why, Jessica!*Shy.* Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

*Laun.* Your worship was wont to tell me that I could do  
nothing without bidding.

*Enter JESSICA.**Jes.* Call you? what is your will?

10

*Shy.* I am bid forth to supper, Jessica:  
There are my keys. But wherefore should I go?  
I am not bid for love; they flatter me:  
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon  
The prodigal Christian. Jessica, my girl,  
Look to my house. I am right loath to go:  
There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,  
For I did dream of money-bags to-night.

*Laun.* I beseech you, sir, go: my young master doth  
expect your reproach.

20

*Shy.* So do I his.

*Laun.* And they have conspired together, I will not say  
you shall see a masque; but if you do, then it was not for  
nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black-Monday last  
at six o'clock in the morning, falling out that year on Ash-  
Wednesday was four year, in the afternoon.

*Shy.* What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica:  
Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum  
And the vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife,  
Clamber not you up to the casements then,  
Nor thrust your head into the public street  
To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces,  
But stop my house's ears, I mean my casements:  
Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter

30

My sober house. By Jacob's staff, I swear,  
I have no mind of feasting forth to-night:  
But I will go. Go you before me, sirrah;  
Say I will come.

*Laun.* I will go before, sir. Mistress, look out at window,  
for all this;

40

There will come a Christian by,  
Will be worth a Jewess' eye.

[*Exit.*]*Shy.* What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?*Jes.* His words were 'Farewell mistress'; nothing else.

*Shy.* The patch is kind enough, but a huge feeder;  
Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day  
More than the wild-cat: drones hive not with me;  
Therefore I part with him, and part with him  
To one that I would have him help to waste  
His borrow'd purse. Well, Jessica, go in:  
Perhaps I will return immediately:  
Do as I bid you; shut doors after you:  
Fast bind, fast find;

50

A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.

[*Exit.*]

*Jes.* Farewell; and if my fortune be not crost,  
I have a father, you a daughter, lost.

[*Exit.*]SCENE VI. *The same.**Enter GRATIANO and SALARINO, masqued.*

*Gra.* This is the pent-house under which Lorenzo  
Desired us to make stand.

*Salar.* His hour is almost past.

*Gra.* And it is marvel he out-dwells his hour,  
For lovers ever run before the clock.

*Salar.* O, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly  
To seal love's bonds new-made, than they are wont  
To keep obliged faith unforfeited!

*Gra.* That ever holds: who riseth from a feast  
With that keen appetite that he sits down?  
Where is the horse that doth untread again  
His tedious measures with the unbated fire  
That he did pace them first? All things that are,  
Are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd.  
How like a younker or a prodigal  
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,  
Hugg'd and embraced by the wanton wind!  
How like the prodigal doth she return,

10