

## SCENE 5

Of Jessica, Lorenzo, and Launcelot at Belmont, and what Jessica says in praise of Portia.

This scene occurs probably just after the departure of Portia and Nerissa.

1. *the sins of the father*, etc., another instance to be added to a collection of references to the Bible in this play.

3. *I fear you* = I fear for you; compare the note on iii. 2. 29 above, and Abbott, § 200.

4. *agitation*, a "malapropism" for "cogitation."

25. *one by another*, means either "one in competition with another," or "taking one with another, reckoning all up."

57. *cover*, a play on two different senses of the word. (i) To put the dishes on the table; (ii) to put the hat on the head. Concerning the latter sense, see note on ii. 9. 44.

60. *quarrelling with occasion*, like "defying the matter" in line 46 below, seems to mean to slight the business in hand for the sake of a verbal quibble.

70. *O dear discretion!* Discretion is invoked as the quality that Launcelot had shown least of. His words are an army, "suited," that is, in uniform. Or perhaps *suited* means "arranged," "placed," "marshalled." That is, his words obey his orders like so many soldiers, but he orders them to the wrong posts.

73. *A many*. It is one of the curiosities of language that we still say "a few," while "a many" has become obsolete, or only provincial. The phrase is to be explained as a "collective."

74. *Garnish'd like him*. Does this mean as ill-furnished with discretion as Launcelot? The habit of quibbling and punning was universal in Shakespeare's time. Cf. note on i. 2. 7.

82. *merit it*, Pope's emendation. The double "it" at the end of the line seems to have led to misprints.

87. *Pawn'd*, put up as a gage or wager. Here it means, in its context, given to make up a deficiency in a wager, given "to boot."

92. *stomach* = appetite.

## ACT IV — SCENE 1

Of the trial of the cause between Shylock the Jew and Antonio the merchant; how Portia, disguised as a Doctor of Civil Law, delivers

Antonio out of the hand of Shylock; and how Bassanio is persuaded to give the Doctor his betrothal ring, which he had vowed never to part from but with his life.

The scene that follows answers in some points to the scene of Bassanio's choice of the leaden casket. To the eye it is even more splendid; the background is the great hall of the High Court of Justice; in front is a throng of eager people, Antonio's merchant-friends from the Rialto, Bassanio's companions-in-arms, and magnificoes from the ducal court, all in dress of many colors; round the bench and near the prisoner stand ruffed halberdiers; aloft sits the Doge, in crimson velvet with an upper garment "of white cloth of silver, with great massy buttons of gold;" a degree below him sit the Senators in red cloth tipped with white ermine; on the right, in earnest talk with Bassanio and Gratiano, stands Antonio, ready for either issue; and, presently, on the left, enters, with bond and knife and scales, Shylock, alone.

1. *What*, where we should rather say "now," or "well." Cf. "What, Jessica," ii. 5. 3 and 4.

5. *Uncapable*. It has been pointed out that the use of *un-* and *in-* in compounds varies capriciously, or by laws of euphony so delicate that they cannot be analyzed. Thus we say, "unequal" but "inequality," "ungrateful" but "ingratitude."

5, 6, *empty from* is equal to "empty of." This double use is like the Latin construction with genitive or ablative in the case of a word such as *egeo*.

7. *qualify*, *i.e.* to temper, or alter by mixing or blending. The word carries on the metaphor implied in "dram of mercy."

8. *obdurate*. How accented?

10. *envy*. See Glossary on the word, and compare *envious*, iii. 2. 285.

16. *Make room*, indicates the crowded state of the court.

18. *i.e.* "that you are carrying this show of hatred up to the moment when you would have to carry it into action."

20. *remorse*. See Glossary.

24. *loose*, let go, refuse to exact or impose.

29. *royal merchant*. Here the phrase seems to have the technical meaning which it has not in iii. 2. 242. It signifies a merchant of such wealth and position as to be dignified with a special title from the court.

35. *possess'd*. See Glossary.

39. *charter* and *freedom*. See note on iii. 2. 281.

43. *it is my humour*. The word contains a reference to the

strange physiological theories of the Middle Ages, whereby certain mental dispositions were connected with different "moistures" or "humors" of the body. Many terms still in use are derived from this old belief, such as "phlegm" and "phlegmatic" applied to temper; "choleric," "melancholy," "sanguine," etc. The "temperament" or "complexion" of a man was thought to depend on the blend of his humors.

43 ff. These lines contain Shylock's first defense for his insistence on the execution of his bond. Some feelings, he says, are ultimate; they cannot be further analyzed. They resemble hysterical states, or strange bodily impulses over which the reason has no control, such as, instinctive fear of certain animals. Of this sort is my antipathy to Antonio.

46. *baned*, poisoned.

47. *gaping pig*. Malone quotes from Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse*: "Some will take on like a mad man if they see a pigge come to the table." A boar's head was, and is, served with a lemon in its open mouth.

50. *for affection, Mistress of passion*. Affection here has its old sense of an impulse of any kind. It is distinguished from passion as excitement from feeling, the nervous impulse from the mental state. The whole passage may be rendered, "For impulse controls feeling, and excites a mood corresponding to itself." This mood may or may not be *reasonable*. For instance, a cat may cause in some particular individual a nervous shock of the kind which is always connected with the mental feeling of fear. In that case fear will be felt in spite of any reassurance by the reason that the cat cannot do any real harm.

The passage is interesting, both for the subtlety of the argument underlying the simple illustrations quoted by Shylock, and also because it is one in which "emendation" (see Appendix A) has certainly given us Shakespeare's original words. The quartos and folios put a full stop at "affection," and put "Masters" or "Masters" at the beginning of the next line. Dr. Abbott has confirmed it by reference to two other places where "mastres," "maistresse," "mistress," have been confused, viz. *The Tempest*, ii. 1. 5; and Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Coxcomb*, ii. 3. 9: "Where be thy mastres, man? I would speak with her."

55. *a harmless necessary cat*. The phrase is one of those which, for some subtle reason, stick in a person's memory, and enter into the language so fully as to be used constantly by folks who could not say where they come from. It is only requisite to look at

attempted translations to see that the magic of such phrases is not transferable; e.g.

"Un chat, familier et inoffensif" (F. Victor Hugo).

"Katz, ein harmlos nützlich Thier" (Schlegel).

56. *a woollen bag-pipe*. The adjective refers strictly to the covering of the wind-bag. The wind-bag itself is commonly made of "greased leather," but it is often covered with woollen cloth. It is hard to see why the commentators have made so much difficulty over the epithet, which conveys just the idea of bleating inoffensiveness that the passage requires.

60. *lodged hate*, i.e. hate that has accumulated.

62. *a losing suit*, i.e. a suit by which he will forego the repayment of his money, and take flesh instead.

64. *the current of thy cruelty*, a sweeping tide of feeling, just as Othello compares his own wrath

"to the Pontic sea,  
Whose icy current and compulsive course  
Ne'er feels retiring ebb."

65 ff. Mark the peculiarly forcible effect of the thrust and counter-thrust of the argument in these epigrammatic single lines.

66. Bassanio's question contains the refutation of Shylock's philosophy. "True, we *have* feelings, produced by external physical causes, feelings which we cannot keep from arising. But we need not *act* upon them, unless we will to do it."

70. *think you question* = remember you are holding converse with.

72. *main*, ocean. *flood*, tide.

76. *no noise* with "forbid" makes a double negative, as in 59 above and 162 below.

77. *fretten*. See Abbott, § 344. Shakespeare in other passages uses *fretted*. The inflectional forms of verbs were much less settled in Shakespeare's time than they are now.

82. *conveniency*, promptitude or despatch.

89. *What judgement shall I dread, doing no wrong?* This is Shylock's second defense. He here takes "wrong" to mean that which is contrary to statute law, and denies therefore that he himself is doing any wrong. He thus occupies the position of the Scribes and Pharisees of the time of Christ, when, for instance, they considered it no "wrong" to refuse help to near relatives, so long as the formula of the Law respecting "Corban" was properly observed.

He claims the literal fulfillment of legal obligations, and believes "right" to consist in that. See, further, note on l. 206.

90. Shylock's third line of argument: "You admit property in human flesh by allowing the purchase of slaves. I have acquired property in a pound of Antonio's flesh. Grant me possession of that which is lawfully mine."

92. *parts*, functions, duties.

104. *Upon my power*, by my constitutional authority.

106. *determine*, decide and conclude (the case).

114. *A tainted wether*, touched with some disease or disabled by some accident. For the bearing of this passage on the character of Antonio, see the study in the Introduction.

123. *Not on thy sole, but on thy soul.* In Shakespeare's time these two words were not, as now, pronounced exactly alike, but "soul" was longer, almost dissyllabic in sound. The same play on words occurs in Act. i. sc. 1 of *Julius Caesar*. This passage between Shylock and Gratiano takes place while the Duke reads Bellario's letter.

125. *hangman's axe*. Hangman was used in quite a general sense as an "executioner," whatever the method of execution might be.

126. In reading this line, probably the pause in the middle is to be counted as taking the place of the third accented syllable, which is omitted, the words *no* and *pierce* taking the fourth and fifth accents. Is any other reading possible?

128. *inexorable* is the correction of F3 for the earlier "inexorable." Dr. Abbott attempts to defend the latter, as meaning "not to be execrated enough," "too bad for execration," which does not fit in with the first half of the line; while, on the other hand, "inexorable" just carries on the sense of the end of line 126.

129 may mean either "Let justice be blamed for having allowed you to live so long," or "Let God's justice be blamed for allowing you to exist at all."

131. *To hold*, i.e. so as to hold. Pythagoras and his doctrine of the transmigration of souls are referred to also in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, two plays written perhaps not much later than *The Merchant of Venice*.

134. *A wolf . . . hang'd for human slaughter.* "On the Continent, down to a comparatively late period, the lower animals were in all respects considered amenable to the laws. Domestic animals were tried in the common criminal courts, and their punishment on conviction was death; wild animals fell under the jurisdiction of

the ecclesiastical courts." Trials of domestic animals were founded "on the Jewish Law, as laid down in *Exodus*, xxi. 28." The last trial and execution of an animal (a cow) in France took place in 1740. See the amusing article in Chambers' *Book of Days*, vol. i. pp. 126-8.

Observe that the pronoun *who* is left dangling. The clause begins as if *who* were to be the subject of the verb in it, but *his fell soul* takes its place in this function. See a similar case in i. 3. 137, and the explanation given in the note on that passage.

135. The belief in the interchange of souls between men and wolves is ancient and widespread, and has led to some of the most uncanny stories in existence. See Baring Gould's *Book of the Werewolf*; and, for the connection of the belief with that in the transmigration of souls, see Tylor's *Anthropology*.

162. *impediment to let him lack*, is to be compared with "forbid to make no noise," above, line 76. There is a negative too many for modern English grammar in these constructions, though not for good Elizabethan, any more than for good Greek. Cf. "just cause or impediment why these two persons should not be joined together," where the positive word "cause" is coupled with the negative "impediment."

169. Enter Portia. Up to now, as Booth, the actor, notes (quoted by Furness), Shylock has fixed all his attention upon the Duke, and has shown only contempt for the other persons present. Bellario's letter disturbs him, and he anxiously watches the young lawyer as he comes into court.

Observe that Portia comes, as Bellario's deputy, to "determine" the cause (line 106 above). She is therefore judge, not advocate. She takes command of the whole cause, and speaks with the authority of the whole court (line 300 below).

For a similar case, in Spanish law, of the delegation of a judicial decision to a "referee" in the person of a juriconsult, see an extremely interesting note by J. T. Doyle, quoted on page 417 of Furness' *Variorum Edition*.

170. *Take your place*, that is, on the judge's bench.

178, 179. "Yet in such a form that no technical objection can be raised to your procedure."

180. *danger* is an ancient legal term, derived from Low Latin *dominium*, and meaning (i) absolute control in general, (ii) the special form of control conferred by the allowance of a legal claim. The words may be rendered, "You come under his claim, do you not?"

184. "Mercy is a virtue that is not to be forced;" "la clémence ne se commande pas," as F. Victor Hugo translates it. For "quality," see Glossary. *strained* = forced or constrained.

191. *attribute to awe*, that which properly belongs to awe, its characteristic symbol. In line 195 below, "attribute" signifies "property" or "natural quality."

200. *We do pray for mercy*, refers, of course, to a clause in the Lord's Prayer, which Portia takes for granted that Shylock knows.

206. *My deeds upon my head!* Shakespeare may have had in his mind a similar cry in a court of justice, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." (*Matt.* xxvii. 25.)

*I crave the Law!* or, as he said before, "I stand here for Law!" This claim of Shylock's, with the appeal of Portia to which it is a reply, may be paralleled with many passages in the Epistles of Saint Paul, where the demand of the strict Jew for the literal fulfillment of the whole of the Law is shown to be self-destructive and to lead of necessity to an Equity or Charity which transcends, but does not evade it. (See particularly *Epistle to the Galatians*, chaps. ii, iii, and iv.) This Equity is not to be Lawlessness, but a new and more perfect Law.

In this as in other points Shakespeare intended Shylock to embody the Jewish spirit as he conceived it. Similarly Portia's position is not less clearly thought out nor less subtly maintained, as we shall see when we reach its final development. But, once more, we must be on our guard against supposing that Shakespeare's chief object was to illustrate two opposing philosophical views. His purpose was to portray Shylock and Portia truthfully. (See Appendix B.)

218. *It must not be.* Portia's refusal to "wrest the law" here reminds us of her saying in i. 2. 116, "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." Cf. also iii. 2. 12.

223. *A Daniel come to judgement!* refers to a story in the Apocrypha, in which Daniel is narrated to have delivered, by his shrewdness, a woman suffering under false accusation.

225. *Let me look upon the bond.* Portia goes concisely, but gradually, to her point. She wishes (i) to give full opportunity to both sides to "say their say," (ii) to prove to the uttermost that Shylock's aim was, not the recovery of his losses, but the "judicial murder" of Antonio.

247-249, *i.e.* the scope of the law certainly includes the exaction of a forfeit, whatever that forfeit may be. In this case there is no doubt that the forfeit is clearly described in the bond.

251. *more elder.* Double signs for the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives are common in Shakespeare, *e.g.*:

"This was the most unkindest cut of all."

(*Julius Cæsar*, iii. 2. 187.)

255. *Are there balance?* See Abbott, § 471. The plural and possessive of nouns in which the singular ends in a sibilant, such as *-s, -se, -ce*, etc., are frequently written without the additional syllable, *e.g.* *Sonnet* cxii:

"my adder's *sense*,

To critic and to flatterer stoppèd *are*."

264. *I am arm'd.* *i.e.* "with a quietness of spirit" (1. 12).

272. *of such misery.* As the line stands, "misery" must be read with the stress accent on the second syllable. But perhaps a monosyllable, such as "slow" or "sad," has dropped out, by printer's error, after "such." The preceding line is also difficult to scan, and the text may be corrupt in both.

275. Observe the beautiful rhythm in this monosyllabic line.

277. *a love*, used of a friend here, as in iii. 4. 7, 13, 17.

283. *Which*, referring to "a wife." "Which" was often applied to persons (as "who" to things) in Tudor English. Cf.:

"The mistress which I serve," *Tempest*, iii. 1. 6.

(*Abbott*, § 265.)

286. Bassanio is not to be taken literally in his readiness to sacrifice his wife. He is expressing his feelings with exaggerated force. The passage amuses the audience in the theatre, who have almost forgotten Portia in the Judge, and have been moved by the sad reality of Antonio's farewell. The situation is full of "irony," but the irony is comic, not tragic. Gratiano and Nerissa extend the relief for a moment longer.

298. *pursue*, accented on the *first* syllable.

304. *A sentence! Come, prepare!* Here, as Irving acts the part, Shylock makes a spring at Antonio, in front of whom Bassanio flings himself.

306. *This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood.* Portia's judgment has given rise to great controversy among the critics. A full account of the controversy is given in Furness' *Variorum Edition*.

It must be remembered that Shakespeare did not *invent* the judgment, but took it from the old story in *Il Pecorone*.

It has been pointed out that Portia's interpretation overlooks the general understanding "that the right to do a certain act confers the right to the necessary incidents of that act," e.g. that the right to cut a piece off a melon confers the right to spill some of its juice.

But to appeal to such a general understanding is to appeal to a principle of common sense or equity, which is not "nominated in the bond;" therefore, Shylock has no more right to invoke it than Portia had a right to compel him to provide a surgeon for Antonio at his own cost.

The judgment is an ancient and traditional one, and is far indeed from being a mere quibble. It belongs to an exceedingly important class of decisions, by which, under the guise of extreme severity, equity was introduced into law, without injury to its stability. Such judgments struck the common imagination deeply because of the cleverness with which the law was saved from defeating its own purpose, and causing injustice. The judgment of Solomon is one instance; another is that of the judge who, being called upon to punish a man for having killed a youth's father by accidentally falling from a high window upon him, bade the youth go and fall out of the same window on the defendant—a means of redress which the youth naturally declined to accept.

In later times such decisions became "bad law," merely because law had absorbed so much of the spirit of equity.

[In connection with the notes on lines 89 and 206 above, as to the similarity of Shylock's position to that of the Pharisees, it is interesting to remember that St. Paul's refutation of the "Judaizers" of his time was, in essence, the same as that of the judgment here. If the letter of the law is to be invoked, it must be invoked in every detail and in every particular ("thou art a debtor to the whole law"), which is seen immediately to be impracticable, since no man can keep it with absolute precision. The new "spirit," however, does not defeat or subvert the law; it fulfills it and completes it, and so saves the law itself from self-destruction.]

Shakespeare is careful to add to the old solution a further point of his own ("the law has yet another hold"), viz. that the bond was an alien's attempt to murder a citizen, and therefore, *ipso facto*, criminal.

**311. confiscate.** Past participles in this form (from Latin past participles in *-atus*) were formerly common, especially in words used in law. The ending *-(e)d* has been added to them now in order to make them conform to regular English use, though some *adjectives*, such as *considerate*, *deliberate*, etc., still show the old forms.

**331. estimation, i.e.** on the scales, "weight."

**334. on the hip.** See note on i. 3. 47.

**335. Why doth the Jew pause?** He is hesitating whether to choose his revenge or his life, unconscious that, should he still resolve to take his pound of flesh, the young judge had "another hold" on him.

**342. barely.** Note the effectiveness of the rhythm here. It seems to indicate a break in Shylock's utterance before and after *barely*.

**346. stay . . . question,** as above, ii. 8. 40, "stay the riping of the time," where "stay" = "wait for," and compare the colloquialism to "stop supper" (Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, ch. xxvi).

**349. alien.** How many syllables in the word here?

**373. Ay, for the state, not for Antonio,** seems to mean that the half which is forfeited to Antonio *must* become his, while the court has power to commute the state's half for a fine.

**380.** There is some little difficulty in following the disposition made by Antonio. But the difficulty is lessened by reading a dash, as in the text, instead of a semicolon, as in the *Globe* edition, after "content." The words then appear to mean: "If it please the court to remit the fine in respect of that half of his goods which is due to the state, I am content to give the other half,—if I may in the meantime have the use of it as capital,—on Shylock's death, to Jessica and her husband." Thus Shylock would keep one half of his goods, while Antonio would trade with the other half during Shylock's lifetime. At his death, the sum-total of his property would pass to Lorenzo and Jessica.

**396. I am not well.** This passage, with the lines 374-7 above, excites our pity for Shylock. He goes out. We hear the crowd howl at him at the door of the court, and then he disappears from our knowledge. We know, however, that he signed the deed in favor of Lorenzo and Jessica (see v. 1. 292). But what became of him? Each of us may have his idea. It would make a good subject for an essay or "study." That his treatment would seem merciful in Shakespeare's time, there can be no doubt. That Shakespeare himself approved of it, we have no evidence to show. On the stage, great actors like Kean and Irving have taken it for granted that we are to pity him, and have made his exit miserably sad to see.

**398.** The twelve godfathers are the twelve jurymen. Such a reference to purely English institutions is of a piece with the mention of a "charter" in the case of Venice. See note on iii. 2. 281.

401. *I entreat you home*, verb of motion implied, as above, "Father, in," ii. 2. 167 and line 403 below, "I must away."

402. contains another obsolete use of the preposition *of* to be added to a collection of such in this play. See also "of force" in line 421 below.

404. *presently* = immediately, as above, 387, and ii. 6. 65; ii. 9. 3.

406. *gratify*, thank and reward.

411. *three thousand ducats*. The payment of a fee by the winning side to a judge or referee seems, to modern ideas, a dangerous form of corruption, but it was quite regular in old days. Here the Duke himself recommends a reward of some kind. See, further, J. T. Doyle's note in Furness' Variorum Edition, p. 417.

412. *cope*, attempt to equal or balance, make up or compensate for. *Withal* was often used as a preposition at the end of a sentence in the same sense as *with*.

421. *of force I must*, I am necessarily obliged. *attempt*, tempt.

431. *to give you this*, *i.e.* by giving you this. So in i. 1. 126, "make moan to be abridged," means "at being abridged." Abbott, § 356.

433. *methinks*. In this phrase "thinks" is an impersonal verb meaning "seems," while "me" is in the dative case.

434. Its worth is greater than that which depends upon its money value.

437. *for*, as regards.

445. *An if*. This "an" is the conjunction "and," as it is often spelled. For an explanation of the use, see Abbott, §§ 101-103.

451. *commandment* is to be pronounced as a quadrisyllable. It is written "commandment" in F 1. Abbott compares *I Henry VI*, i. 3. 20, "From him I have express command(e)ment."

457. *toward*: to be pronounced as two syllables.

## SCENE 2

*More of the adventure of the rings.*

6. *upon more advice*, after more thought. So "advised" = careful, thoughtful (i. 1. 142, etc.).

16. *old swearing*, "old" is used in its familiar, jocular sense, common in Shakespeare's time, about equivalent to "fine," "rare,"

"great." So Sir Thomas North, in translating *The Life of Alexander the Great*, writes "At this feast there was *old* drinking." Cf. also *Macbeth*, ii. 3. 2, and *Much Ado*, v. 2. 98.

## ACT V

*Of the home-coming of Portia and Bassanio; how he brings the Merchant with him from Venice; and of the end of the adventure of the rings.*

The scene is the avenue to Portia's house. Around is the garden, "full of tall shrubs and lofty trees — the tulip tree, the poplar, and the cedar. There are terraces and flights of steps, cascades and fountains, broad walks, avenues, and ridings, with alcoves and banqueting-houses in the rich architecture of Venice."

Lorenzo and Jessica are waiting for the return of their friends. The interval is filled with talk that richly interprets "soft stillness and the night," and with music played by Portia's musicians "of the house."

Shakespeare does not usually end a play — in the modern fashion — on its culminating sensation, nor send his audience away with their hearts in their mouths. He winds his threads of story quietly off. (For instances, see the close of *Hamlet* and of *Romeo and Juliet*.) He adds here a consummately beautiful picture of tranquillity and happiness, necessary to restore the balance of the comedy, after the anguish of the trial scene.

1. *In such a night*. These miniature pictures of three "star-crossed lovers" and of the witch Medea embody the secrecy, the passion, and the sadness of a moonlit night.

The detail of the pictures is Shakespeare's own, but the persons, as Hunter shows, were probably suggested to him by Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida* and *Legend of Good Women*, in the latter of which Thisbe, Dido, and Medea follow one another.

Shakespeare, of course, wrote a play, *Troilus and Cressida*, later in his career, on the theme of one of these pairs of lovers, and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he had already used the story of Thisbe as the subject matter of the play presented to Duke Theseus by the Athenian artisans.

10. *stood Dido*. This is perhaps the most beautiful of the series of pictures. Whether or no Shakespeare read Virgil, he was fond of Dido, and several times refers to her. He believed she was reconciled to Æneas in the after-world:

"Dido and her Æneas shall want troops,  
And all the haunt be ours" (*Ant. and Cleop.*, iv. 14. 53).

*willow*, the token of unrequited or forsaken love.

11. *waft* = "wafted," or perhaps "waved."

13. *Medea gather'd*. The description of the herbs and other charms with which Medea renewed the youth of Æson, the old father of Jason, is to be found in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book vii:

"Addidit exceptas *Lunae de nocte pruinās*," etc.

Lichas, Midas, Hercules' rescue of Hesione, Orpheus, all figure in the *Metamorphoses*. It seems as if Shakespeare had the book fresh in his mind when he wrote the *Merchant*.

23. *outnight*, like "outface" in iv. 2. 17.

28. *Stephano*: to be pronounced here with the *a* long. In *The Tempest* it is pronounced correctly, with the *a* short.

31. *by holy crosses*, such as are still to be seen by the roadside in Roman Catholic countries.

46. *post*, *i.e.* a messenger, so called from the "posts" or stations fixed at regular intervals along the main roads, where change of horses, etc. could be obtained. Such messengers often carried horns, with which they announced their approach to a town, or summoned the people to hear a proclamation, news, etc.

49. *Sweet soul*. Printed, in defiance of reason and rhythm, as part of the clown's speech, by all the early editions. The correction was first made by Rowe. See Appendix A.

51. *signify*, make known, announce.

56. *creep in*: "in" for "into," frequent in Shakespeare. Cf. *Richard III*, i. 2. 261:

"But first I'll turn yon fellow *in* his grave."

57. *touches*, notes.

59. *patines*, small plates of gold in which the consecrated wafer or bread is presented to communicants.

60. According to ancient theories of astronomy, the planets and stars were fixed in eight concentric spheres which revolved about the earth, making, as they moved, the music of a perfect diapason, — too delicate a music, however, for human ears to catch. There are numberless references in English poetry to this "music of the spheres." In this passage the conception is rather different: it is the stars themselves, not the spheres, that sing; and it is possible, as has been suggested, that Shakespeare had *Job*, xxxviii. 7

in his mind: "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

62. *still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins*. One of the most magical lines in Shakespeare. "Young-eyed" may be illustrated from Sir Joshua Reynolds's famous picture of cherub-faces. The line recalls, in subject as in beauty, Horatio's farewell to Hamlet —

"Good night, sweet prince,  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

The form *cherubin* follows French *chérubin*. The form *cherubim*, now the prevalent form of the plural, is after the Hebrew plural.

65. *close us in*. Rowe's emendation for "close in it," of Q 1 and Ff, and "close it in" of Q 2. It is plain that the "it" at the end of the line has confused the printers. The meaning, or the part of it that can be expressed in prose, is: Immortal souls thus are full of a music which we mortals, while we are so thickly clad in perishable clay, are not able to hear. "Grossly" conveys the double idea of thickness and insensibility.

66. *wake Diana*, that is, rouse the moon, which has now gone behind a cloud, and is asleep, as it were. The scene is not meant to be flooded with clear moonlight throughout. See also line 92 below. Further on again there is an indication that the moon is shining once more.

73. Note the effectiveness of the metrical form here.

77. *a mutual stand*, a general halt, as if by agreement.

78. Both *savage* and *modest* have slightly different senses here from their modern use. "Savage" means "wild," as a wild rose is "rose sauvage" in French. There is no implication of cruelty in the word. "Modest," again, is not "humble," but "orderly" or "docile." The Shakespearean meanings are thus nearer to the original "silvaticus" and "modestus."

79. *the poet*. Ovid, in *Metamorphoses*, books x and xi, tells the tale of Orpheus. But there may very likely be a reference here to Virgil's account of the legend in the fourth book of the *Georgics*. What other references to Orpheus do you know of in Shakespeare? What in Milton?

80. *drew*, in the same sense as "draw" above, l. 68.

82. *his*, the old possessive form of "it." Cf. l. 61 above.

85. *is fit for treasons*. Like Cassius, the typical conspirator (*Julius Cæsar*, i. 2. 200 ff.), "he hears no music."

These lines are sometimes quoted — like many others of the poet's — as if they expressed Shakespeare's own opinion. But the

words are *Lorenzo's*. "Let no such man be trusted," seems to have irritated the commentator Steevens: see his long note quoted in Furness' Variorum Edition. Instances to the contrary might be cited: Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Johnson, Dean Hook, Dean Stanley—good men who could not distinguish one tune from another.

87. *Erebus*, the covered place, the under-world, "dim region of dead corpses."

88. *Mark the music. Enter Portia and Nerissa.*

Portia is still full of the strong emotions roused in her by the trial; on her way home she has talked with the hermit, and prayed at the wayside crosses. For a while her reflections are grave and serious. She stands above Jessica and Lorenzo, and talks softly to Nerissa, while the music plays.

97. *the main*. The word is often used in Shakespeare for "the ocean," and sometimes for a mainland or continent. Here the qualifying phrase of *waters* is added for definiteness.

98. *Music of the house*, that is, a band of musicians.

99. *good . . . without respect*, *i.e.* without reference to circumstances.

107. Good things miss their final flavor of perfection unless they are well-timed. There is a play on the double sense of "season."

109. *Endymion*, who slept an eternal sleep on the side of Mount Latmus, kissed by the rays of the moon. A contemporary drama by John Lyly, on the theme of the love of Cynthia (or Diana) for the youth had a great reputation in Shakespeare's time. It was called *Endymion*.

121. *tucket*, a note or strain on a trumpet. Ital. *tocatta*.

127. *day with the Antipodes*, that is, daylight during the night as well as the day.

130. *a light wife*, a fickle wife, punned here with "light," the opposite of heavy; as in the foregoing line it is punned with "light" in the sense of "brightness." The same pun occurs above, ii. 6. 42. Portia, as we have seen before, makes skillful use of puns at moments when her friends might feel constrained or embarrassed. Her play on "bound," six lines below, is an admirable instance of the cleverness with which she manages to be grateful without being formal or tiresome.

132. *God sort all*, let God arrange or decree as he will. Portia tauntingly intimates that after all she *may* turn out a fickle wife.

141. *i.e.* I cut short the politeness of mere words. For "breathing," Malone compares "mouth-honour, *breath*" from *Macbeth*, v. 3.

27. Cf. also in this play ii. 9. 90, "commends and courteous *breath*."

148. *posy*, *i.e.* the motto engraved on the inside of the ring. The word is another form of *poesy*, the motto usually being in rhyme.

149. *cutler's poetry*, the doggerel engraved on knife-blades.

156. *respective*, scrupulous, careful.

162. *a little scrubbed boy*, short or stunted like a scrub or shrub (two forms of the same word). The comic "irony" is delightful in this contemptuous description of Nerissa to her own self. "A prating boy" ("plauderbube," as Schlegel turns it) is excellent from Gratiano, who had at last found some one that could outtalk him. Compare Lorenzo's complaint, i. 1. 106.

172-174. What difference do you note between the Shakespearean and the modern uses of "leave" and "masters" in these lines?

176. *mad* of course means "insane" here, but the use of it with the following phrase is interesting as showing how the transition to the modern colloquial sense "angry" probably occurred.

177. *I were best*, a confusion between two constructions:

(i) "Me were best" = it would be best for me  
(as "you were best" in ii. 8. 33 = it would be best for you), and

(ii) "I had best."

A different form of the same confusion occurs in *Richard II*—

"*Me* rather *had* my heart might feel your love

Than my unpleas'd eye see your courtesy" (iii. 3. 192, 193).

"I were best" is a case where the "psychological subject," *i.e.* the person who is chief in the thought, has become, in spite of rule, the grammatical subject, chief in the grammar also. See Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, § 180, and Abbott, § 230.

201. *contain*, keep.

203. *much unreasonable*. It is odd that we now only use "much" in this adverbial way with adjectives of the comparative or superlative degree, *e.g.* "much older," "much the oldest," but not "much old." So, again, we say "I will come *very* likely," but not "I will come *likely*" (a Scotticism).

203-206. Portia, in her pretended anger, clips the connecting links between the clauses. "Who is there so unreasonable (as to) have lacked good manners (to such an extent as) to press for a thing regarded by its owner as sacred?"

210. *civil doctor*, a doctor of civil law.

216. *enforced*, morally obliged; compare what Bassanio had said to the doctor—

"Dear sir of *force* I must attempt you further" (iv. 1. 421).



217. *beset with shame and courtesy*, "courtesy" the desire to show gratitude, "shame" the desire not to seem ungrateful; the negative and positive poles of the same feeling.

220. *candles of the night*, stars, just as Banquo, in *Macbeth*, says of a cloudy night, "There's husbandry in heaven; their *candles* are all out."

243. *Wherein I see myself*. Refers to the image of himself reflected from the retina of her eyes. By looking closely one can see such a reduced image of oneself in the eyes of another. Allusions to the phenomenon were rather common in Elizabethan literature, the images often being called "babies," *i.e.* dolls.

250. *which*, refers to "body," not to "wealth."

253. *advisedly*, deliberately. See note on iv. 2. 6.

256. *swear to keep this ring*. Note, in point of dramatic construction, that the incident of the rings is not a mere "excessiveness" on the plot, but serves to bring about the recognition and explanation at the close with more spirit and humor than would have been possible by any other device.

271. *as soon as you*. See note at the beginning of Act iii, sc. 4.

273. *Antonio, you are welcome*. Portia has revealed herself now as Doctor Balthasar of Rome, and she welcomes Antonio once again in her double character.

Here is the crowning point of the play. The Merchant of Venice recognizes in the heroine of the caskets the heroine of the bond, his own deliverer in the wife of his dearest friend; here we learn that his "argosies with portly sail," in the fate of which we were interested at the opening of the play (i. 1. 9), have come richly to harbor; here also the romance of the flight of the miser's daughter comes to a comfortable end; by Portia's care her future fortune is assured.

286. *living* = property, as in iii. 2. 158.

288. *road*, compare i. 1. 19.

294. *manna*, one more reference to a Bible story. How many other such references can you recall from the play?

298. *inter'gatories*, a clipped form of "interrogatories," questions to which a witness was sworn to give true replies; a phrase, as Lord Campbell tells us, that belongs to the Court of Queen's Bench. Portia speaks once more as the "Civil Doctor."

## APPENDIX A

### THE TEXT

BEGINNERS in Shakespearean study need not concern themselves with minute questions of textual criticism, but it is important that they should know some preliminary points.

We have good reason for thinking that in many obscurely worded passages of Shakespeare the obscurity arises from the fact that we have not the words exactly as he wrote them. Half of his plays were not printed at all during his lifetime. The other half show no traces of having been printed under his supervision or with his correction.

The plays printed during his lifetime were printed singly and in quarto size (called *quarto* because each page is of the size of the fourth part of a full sheet of foolscap). The first collected edition of the plays was printed in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, and was edited by two fellow-actors of his, Heminge and Condell. This edition is known as the First Folio (called *Folio* because each page has the full length of a foolscap sheet or *leaf*).

*The Merchant of Venice* is one of the plays printed in Shakespeare's lifetime. Two Quarto editions of the play appeared, both in 1600; one certainly, and the other almost certainly, printed by J. Roberts. The edition known as the First Quarto was not only printed but also *published* by J. Roberts. The so-called Second Quarto was published by Thomas Heyes.

The play was not printed again until it appeared in the First Folio, 1623.<sup>1</sup>

Even nowadays when elementary schools, machine-printing, and systematic revision of proofs have greatly reduced the number of printers' errors, an editor finds much to correct before a book can be published. But in Shakespeare's time, when spelling was so uncertain, when printing was often done by ill-educated journeymen with insufficient type at their own houses, when authors were indifferent as to how their plays appeared or whether they appeared

<sup>1</sup> These three editions are known to critics by the symbols Q 1, Q 2, F 1.