

ICONOLOGY IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

by

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# ERRATA

## Page Line

- 5 32 for 'the doy' read 'the dog'
- 9 39 for 'Anatomy a' read 'Anatomy at'
- 14 7 for 'Fasciculo di Medicinae' read 'Fasciculo de medicina'
- 15 35 for 'forshadow' read 'foreshadow'
- 20 24 for '*Corpus juris cononici*' read '*Corpus juris canonici*'
- 23 40 for 'encourage' read 'encourages'
- 24 34 for 'centred around' read 'centred on'
- 41 1 for 'Persecution is the stuff on which martyrs are founded' read 'Persecution is such stuff as martyrs are made on'
- 48 4 omit comma
- 54 20 for 'conjurs' read 'conjures'
- 54 26 for 'he is if fact' read 'he is in fact'
- 58 16 for 'a set stocks' read 'a set of stocks'
- 59 7 for 'relate' read 'relates'
- 59 9 for 'Shakespeare" read 'Shakespeare's'
- 59 23 for 'as is comes' read 'as it comes'
- 73 1 for 'to his house' read 'on his house'
- 73 5 for 'feeling' read 'feelings'
- 73 28 for 'centred around' read 'centred on'
- 78 5 for 'testing' read 'tests'
- 78 19 for 'explanatory' read 'explanatory'
- 79 21 for 'possiblity' read 'possibility'
- 100 20 for 'egoistical' read 'egotistical'
- 105 33 for 'differently to' read 'differently from'
- 111 3 for 'in the play is' read 'in the play in'
- 116 25 for 'characters which' read 'characters who'
- 118 3 for 'the are' read 'they are'
- 135 27 for 'the gloves represents' read 'the gloves represent'
- 146 28 for 'complimentary' read 'complementary'
- 153-156 mention should be made here of Webb's BS theatre drawing, Ware's section through constructed theatre (c1736) and Webb's [?] preliminary drawing, showing a section of the degrees, at Worcester College (Harris/Tait 2, Gotch 1/7A). Ware's drawing shows connection between all degrees; the preliminary drawing shows separation of the degrees and Webb's drawing shows separation of seating from standing degrees. A further drawing for a round anatomy theatre (RIBA) shows 5 rows of degrees all accessed from a central open area with a wider ambulatory at the back.
- 161 17 for 'breakthoug' read 'breakthrough'
- 171 13 for 'comtemplation' read 'contemplation'
- 198 18 for 'who we actually see' read 'whom we actually see'
- 198 29 for 'two side of one coin' read 'two sides of one coin'
- 199 37 omit comma

**Page Line**

205 31 for 'can not' read 'cannot'

211 16 for 'after is has been' read 'after it has been'

217 38 for 'introduces the ideal' read 'introduces the idea'

221 4 for 'different world to' read 'different world from'

228 4 for 'superceded' read 'superseded'

229 31 for 'version' read 'versions'

232 16 for 'sacriligious' read 'sacrilegious'

241 30 for 'version' read 'versions'

244 19 for 'consonent' read 'consonant'

244 36 for 'opposing, the' read 'opposing the'

247 19 for 'unbalanced set' read 'unbalanced yoke'

249 21 for 'notices' read 'noticed'

255 30 omit comma at end of line

257 17 for 'consonent' read 'consonant'

270 1 for 'Fasciculo di Medicinae' read 'Fasciculo de medicina'

277 18 for 'sacreligious' read 'sacrilegious'

282pl 61.a for 'bellow' read 'bellows'

296 15 for 'entitles' read 'entitled'

297 n 25 insert 'Green, *Alciati Emblems in the Full Stream*, p.6'

300 5 for 'thriteenth' read 'thirteenth'

307 19 for 'Pilautia' read 'Philautia'

311 15 for 'out skarfes' read 'our skarfes'

312 15 for 'the audience have' read 'the audience has'

316 20 for 'Friutfull' read 'Fruitfull'

324 n 15 should read 'Choulant, p.115. Johannes de Ketham, a German physician working in Italy toward the end of the fifteenth century collated the original *Fasciculus Medicinae* of 1491. The Italian translation of 1493 appeared with the colophon *Qui finisce el Fasciculo de medicina Vulgarizato per Sebastiano Manilio Romano E stampito, etc, in Venexia* and is the first edition to contain the illustration referred to and reproduced in Illustration 59.'

**Additions to Bibliography:**

G. Wolf-Heidegger and Anna Maria Cetto, *Die anatomische Sektion in bildlicher Darstellung* (Basel, S. Karger, 1967)

Gottfried Richter, *Das anatomische Theater* (Berlin, Eberling, 1936)



## ICONOLOGY IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

### Abstract

*The Merchant of Venice* has been, to a great extent, isolated from serious iconographic work. Most critical analyses tend to return to the same themes, for example the character of Shylock. The study of visual imagery in Shakespeare attracted research which peaked in the 1960s, gaining fresh impetus from the emergence of a new approach which redirected iconographic interpretations with reference to the emblem books and Elizabethan pageantry. Interest then decreased, although the subject was by no means exhausted. In 1973 N. Alexander commented 'it seems time for a more substantial demonstration' of the theatrical and iconographic approach to Shakespearean imagery', but to date this has not happened.

Some studies have dealt with the iconographic pictures of Portia as the New Law and Shylock as the Old<sup>2</sup>, and some have explored, although not in great depth, some emblematic themes in the casket scenes<sup>3</sup>. Until this thesis no one, as far as I have been able to discover, has yet given a picture of the whole play in terms of its imagery, emblematicism and iconography; yet it presents its material with an unusual visual emphasis, not only in the overtly emblematic casket scenes, but throughout the play. Shakespeare's use of iconology in this play can teach us much about his methods generally: for example, it reveals a wide range of sources and influences which include the popular emblem books, philosophical tracts, the Bible, folk-tales, paintings and topical issues of contemporary life (such as the ethics of anatomy) some of which have not been, until now, related to the play.

One reason why critics have avoided treating the play in a comprehensive way may be the very richness of its themes, especially those dealing with paired opposites such as Love/Money, Mercy/Justice, Love/Friendship, Appearance/Reality and Familiar/Alien. In addition the play deals with a subject which in the latter half of the twentieth century we are at pains to minimise; that of anti-Semitism. To further complicate things, the genre of the play is hard to determine.

This thesis explores new insights into the iconographic elements which give emphasis to the stage pictures presented, in a comprehensive study of the whole play, both in the richness of its language and imagery, and in its thematic content and its implications beyond the contemporary theatrical world. What emerges from such a study falls into sections in the thesis on Emblems, the Caskets, Rings, Antonio as an Anatomy Subject, The Jew as Alien and Usurer and Justice and Mercy. The principal appendix outlines the History of the Science of Anatomy.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank various people for their help during the preparation of this thesis: Professor John Orrell, for kindly providing material which was particularly helpful in the early stages of my research, Jonathan Sawday, for exchanging ideas on anatomists and their subjects/victims, and most particularly, Dr. David Daniell for his assistance, persistence and patience through all the stages of the production of this dissertation.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the staff at several libraries, especially those at the British Library, who have been particularly helpful. Other libraries which have been of great assistance include Senate House, London, University College, London and the Warburg Institute, London.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the constant support and encouragement of my parents.

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## Chapter 1

### EMBLEMS

#### 1. *The Merchant of Venice* and the imagery of danger

*The Merchant of Venice* presents for the first time in Shakespeare's comedies a gradual build-up of non-comic tension. Shakespeare has used the threat of danger in his earlier comedies to contrast with the humour and lightness of the core of the play, but the life-threatening situations are introduced at the beginning, only to be forgotten during the passage of the plot, and to re-emerge at the end when they are quickly solved or simply dismissed. *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the most obvious examples of this. Aegeon is in danger of losing his life at the beginning of the former because of the strict laws of the country, which the Duke declares he cannot waive:

Now, trust me, were it not against our laws,  
Against my crown, my oath, my dignity,  
Which prices, would they, may not disannul,  
My soul should sue as advocate for thee.

(*Comedy of Errors* I ii 143-146)

but his danger is forgotten during the farcical misunderstandings of the plot and only reappears at the end to increase the confusion between the twins. The audience, however, knows by this time that Aegeon's ransom will be paid when he encounters the right son, and in fact the Duke does what he had, at the beginning, said was impossible, and waives the laws he had insisted were so strict. When both Antipholi offer money for the ransom, the Duke replies

It shall not need; thy father hath his life. (V i 389)

Likewise in the *Dream* Hermia is threatened with death or incarceration as a nun if she does not comply with her father's wishes, and again the law is strict and Egeus demands his rights at the end of the proscribed period:

I beg the law, the law upon his head.

(*A Midsummer Night's Dream* IV i 152)

but once more the law is balked, this time mainly because Egeus' choice of son-in-law no longer wishes to marry his daughter.<sup>1</sup>

Egeus' words foreshadow Shylock's calls for Law and Justice, and the situation is similar, as is that in *Comedy of Errors*, in that the laws of the State allow no leniency or mercy, but unlike the other comedies, the threat to Antonio's life in *The Merchant of Venice* develops steadily throughout the play, culminating in the key trial scene. The crescendo of

tension is missing from the earlier comedies, in which the threat is forgotten while the play gets on with its comic matter. In *The Merchant of Venice* the situation presents a persistent and cumulative danger, and the shadow it casts over the play is partly because it is not solely a matter of physical danger, but a symbol of the destruction of the soul, and a threat to the very fabric of society. The danger takes on a macrocosmic as well as a microcosmic aura. Shylock's demands threaten not only Antonio's life, but the law and even the existence of the State. This had been hinted at in the apparently immutable laws of Ephesus and Athens, but Shakespeare develops it fully in *The Merchant of Venice*, bringing into focus the dangers of absolute justice untempered by mercy. The danger creates a shadow in the play not visible in the earlier comedies, nor, in its looming tension, in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the darkness is emphasised by the use of images related to destruction.

Shakespeare's use of images in his earlier plays is largely for descriptive purposes, as in Helena's reference to Cupid in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;  
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.  
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;  
 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:  
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
 Because in choice he is so oft beguill'd.  
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,  
 So the boy Love is perjur'd everywhere. (I i 234-241)

where Shakespeare establishes the picture of blind Cupid by presenting eight lines which are in the nature of the explicatory verses of the emblem books, and which allow no ambiguity in interpretation. In Adriana's plea to the man she believes to be her husband:

Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine;  
 Thou art the elm, my husband, I a vine,  
 Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,  
 Makes me with thy strength to communicate.  
 If aught possess thee from me, it is dross,  
 Usurping ivy, brier, or idle moss;  
 Who all, for want of pruning, with intrusion  
 Infect thy sap, and live on thy confusion.  
 (*The Comedy of Errors* II ii 172-179)

Shakespeare makes use of a common emblem, that of the vine entwining an elm as a representation of love which survives beyond death, and again the image is followed up by explanatory lines. Although the mention of ivy in this passage also invokes another common image of the choking properties of that plant, which perhaps at a later stage in his career Shakespeare might have expanded to introduce the idea that Adriana's jealousy is

strangling her relationship with her husband, at this point in his development such complexities appear only in embryo. The images he uses in the early plays are clearly explained, and leave nothing to the imagination. They work on one level only, not having the depth or levels of meaning of the images used in *The Merchant of Venice*, and this thesis will set out to argue that in the latter play Shakespeare uses images in a new and powerful way, and with more visual immediacy than in any earlier play, or arguably in any later play. The thread connecting *The Merchant's* images is one of destruction, not only physically but spiritually. The characters, valid in their own right, cast cosmic shadows as they assume the larger roles of Justice, Mercy and Everyman. It is the images used that introduce and exploit the build-up of tension and danger. Shakespeare uses metaphor and metonymy instead of simile, and his earlier images, whose explanations leave no flexibility in meaning and work on a superficial level only, are replaced by images which develop a series of deeper levels, and should be read (visually as well as aurally) vertically rather than horizontally. Titania's speech to Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Act II

His mother was a vot'ress of my order;  
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,  
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side;  
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
 Marking th'embarked traders on the flood;  
 When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive,  
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;  
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait  
 Following - her womb then rich with my young squire -  
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land,  
 To fetch me trifles, and return again,  
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise. (II i 123-134)

comes closest to Salerio's speech at the opening of *The Merchant of Venice*:

My wind, cooling my broth,  
 Would blow me to an ague when I thought  
 What harm a wind too great might do at sea.  
 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,  
 And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,  
 Which, touching but my gentle 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? (I i 22-35)



but Titania's speech lacks the tension of an image which implies danger, and Salerio, not content with one image, piles several related ones on top of each other, all of which are closely linked with the idea of destruction and distortion.

*The Merchant of Venice* is closer to tragi-comedy than pure comedy, and the outcome of its plot is uncertain, or would have been to audiences unfamiliar with the story.<sup>2</sup> *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy, but its early stages are equally as comic as *The Merchant's* and an audience presented with only the first half of each play could perhaps be forgiven for believing *The Merchant* to be the tragedy and *Romeo and Juliet* the comedy.

*The Merchant of Venice* introduces the idea of destruction, not only to the individual but to society. The theatre of the world is a macrocosmic reflection of the public theatre and the anatomy theatre, whose relationship will be discussed fully in this thesis. The trial scene relates to the image of the anatomy theatre, and embodies its destructive element as manifested in the stripping away of dignity and the loss of regard for the human body, and by extension the soul, as something sacred, mysterious and untouchable. As the body in the anatomy theatre is peeled back in layers until it is reduced to a collection of guts, so Shylock is progressively stripped of possessions, livelihood and religion, until he is a negligible quantity who can only answer with resignation

I am content ...

I pray you give me leave to go from hence;

I am not well; send the deed after me

And I will sign it.

(IV 1 389, 390-392)

The theatre, both dramatic and anatomical, is also, however, a place of revelation, where people may learn about themselves. Destruction can be turned into creation, and the upswing of the final act returns the play to comedy, with its restoration of order and happiness.

The use of images in *The Merchant of Venice* carries throughout the play a new and vital sensitivity to the stage pictures invoked by verbal outline. Shakespeare, in this play, uses a new language which he exploits in *The Merchant* more than, perhaps, in any other play. It is as if the novelty of discovering what can be done by an awareness of ideas linked in the audience's mind by verbal and visual pictures suddenly unleashes a torrent of complex images, which are used to deepen the texture of what is being

said or acted out in a form of shorthand conveying far more than is immediately apparent on the surface; as John Doeblen remarks in his book *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures*:

Particularly interesting is the way in which a visual image could communicate to a Renaissance audience a concentrated pattern of associations summarizing the inner meaning of many dramatic events, all the more so if the meaning were in turn a union of seeming opposites, such as love and chastity or free will and fate. The iconic is one of Shakespeare's many forms of ellipsis.<sup>3</sup>

Once Shakespeare has developed this new use of imagery, he is free in his later plays to use it at will - to discard or develop and refine the mass of iconology that he has exploited in *The Merchant of Venice*.

## 2. The Emblem Book

One of the most popular sources of imagery in the late sixteenth century was the emblem book, in which verbal and visual images worked together to strengthen, explain and develop each other, and this thesis will show that *The Merchant of Venice* reinforces our awareness that Shakespeare was well acquainted with such popular literature. The importance of emblem books to the study of literature of the Renaissance has been the subject of much critical work, notably by Henry Green.<sup>4</sup> With the decay of the medieval allegorical plays, personifications such as those of the virtues and vices fitted uneasily into the developing 'realistic' drama: the emblem books form a bridge between these in their depiction of a mixture of personifications, proverbial sayings and everyday commonsense by means of motto, illustration (usually in the medium of a woodcut) and verse. The emblem book provided a picture book of abstract ideas creating a repertoire of instantly recognisable logotypes which conveyed a sometimes complex group of meanings. Emblems therefore convey a symbolic meaning, but in 1574 Claude Mignault established the difference between emblems and symbols in his *Syntagma de Symbolis*:

The force of the emblem depends upon the symbol, but they differ as man and animal; the latter has a more general meaning, the former a more special. All men are animals, but all animals are not men; so all emblems are symbols, tokens, or signs, but all symbols are not emblems: the two possess affinity indeed, but not identity.<sup>5</sup>

Geffrey Whitney, whose book *A Choice of Emblemes*, published in 1586, did much to popularise the emblem book, defines emblems in his address to the Reader:

[thel] worde being in Greeke ἐμβάλλεσθαι, vel ἐπεμβλήσθαι, is as muche to saye in Englishe as *To set in, or To put in*: properlie ment by

suche figures, or workes, as are wroughte in plate, or in stones in the pavementes, or on the waules, or suche like, for the adorning of the place: havinge some wittie devise expressed with cunning woorkemanship, somethinge obscure to be perceived at the first, whereby, when with further consideration it is understood, it maie the greater delighe the behoulder.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.a. The popularity of the emblem book in the sixteenth century

The emblem book has its origins in Europe. One of the earliest emblem-type books was the *Narrenschiff* by Sebastian Brant which was first printed in 1494 and proved to be very popular throughout the Continent, and particularly in England. In the introduction to his 1944 translation of the *Narrenschiff*, Edwin H. Zeydel says that:

Brant's masterpiece held its ground in England more persistently than in Germany, despite stronger competition - not as a German work, however, but through the English and French adaptations. And it did English literature, as it did French literature, too, a great service in giving a fresh stimulus and a new form to vernacular satire, and in helping to bridge the gap between the literature of personified abstractions and that of social types, of modern satirical portraiture. It played an important role in outmoding medieval allegory and morality and in directing literature into the channels of the drama, the essay and the novel of character.<sup>7</sup>

Brant's book was a piecing together of various authorities, the Bible, the *Corpus juris canonici*, the Church Fathers, and the ancients in order to show the numerous follies of the human race: in this it was not, strictly speaking, one of the true emblem books which appear in the sixteenth century, which range more widely than the simple depiction of folly, and include pieces on individuals such as Sir Walter Raleigh, descriptions of personifications like Justice and animal fables. The *Narrenschiff* does, however, have the format of an emblem book, using the three-part exposition of motto, woodcut and verse. It was published first in 1494 and was written in German, but appeared in numerous translations and free adaptations including two versions in English, one in prose and one in verse, both printed in 1509.<sup>8</sup>

The first real emblem book was produced in Italy by Andrea Alciati in 1531 and its popularity was such that it went through ninety editions in the sixteenth century and was translated into English, French, Italian and Spanish.<sup>9</sup> Green points out that

It is scarcely possible that so many editions should have issued from the press, and so much learning have been bestowed, without the knowledge of Alciat's [sic] Emblems having penetrated every nook and corner of the literary world.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.b. The emblem book as an educational and moral tool

Peter Daly points out that the emblem books were not simply picture books intended to provide pleasure to the reader:

The emblem-books indicate *what* educated readers *knew* about nature, history and mythology and furthermore how they *interpreted* this knowledge ... [they are] a reservoir of such *information* and its *interpretation*, and as they were to be found in every public and private library, they were accessible to all who could read. The illiterate were also made aware of emblems by the preacher in his sermons; they saw and heard emblems on the stage. they were surrounded by emblematic motifs in the visual arts, e.g. in church windows, coats-of-arms, paintings and decorations.<sup>11</sup>

and Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning*, Book V, Chapter 5, points out the advantages of the emblem as an educational tool:

Emblem reduceth conceits intellectual to images sensible, which strike the memory more; out of which axioms may be drawn much better practise than that in use; and besides which axioms, there are divers more touching help of memory, not inferior to them.<sup>12</sup>

Alciati himself emphasises that emblems were 'no vain picture which may feed the eyes' in his address *Ad Lectorum*<sup>13</sup> and goes on to show that he regarded them as a kind of pattern book or practical manual for all those engaged in the decorative arts:

For I say this is their use, that as often as any one may wish to assign fulness to empty things, ornament to bare things, speech to dumb things, and reason to senseless things, he may from a little book of Emblems, as from an excellently well-prepared hand-book, have what he may be able to impress on the walls of houses, on windows of glass, on tapestry, on hangings, on tablets, vases, ensigns, seals, garments, the table, the couch, the arms, the sword, and lastly, furniture of every kind.<sup>14</sup>

Another emblematiser, Ripa, in his *Iconologia* (Rome, 1603) claims a much wider range of use:

to the orator, to the preacher, to the poet, to the painter, to the sculptor, to the designer, and to every man of study, for the invention of conceits, emblems, and impresas, for devising all preparations for nuptials, funerals, and triumphs, for the representation of poems and dramas, and for the figuring of them with their proper symbols.<sup>15</sup>

and Alexander Barclay, in his translation into English of Brant's *Narrenschiff* of c1509 propounds the theory that moralities have a healing effect:

I have also noted that manye wise men and well lettred have written right fruitfull doctrynes, whereby they have healed these diseases and intollerable perturbations of the minde, and the ghostly woundes thereof, muche better then Esculapius, whiche was fyrste Inventour of Phisike, and amonge the Gentiles worshipped as a God.<sup>16</sup>

He goes on to praise the poets for providing moral pointers to foolish mankind in both tragedies and comedies:

They teache what is good, and what is evill, to what ende vice, and what end vertue bringeth us. And do not poetes revile and sharply bite in their poemes all suche as are unmeke, proude, covetous, lecherous, wanton, delicious, wrathfull, gluttons, wasters, envieurs, enchauntours, faythbreakers, rashe, unadvised, malapert, drunken, untaught, fooles, and suche like.

This idea is, of course, not new, but its placing in an emblematic context indicates its accepted association with moral teaching.

The expansion of the sphere of influence of emblems in the fifty years between Alciati's book and that of Ripa is evidence of the increase in popularity of the device and the idea it embodied.

## 2.c. Pageantry in Elizabethan England

The rising popularity of the emblem books was matched by a growing enthusiasm in Elizabethan society for increasingly elaborate pageantry, often taking place on their streets, as Sheila Williams states:

If we allow that the essence of the emblem was a picture plus a verbal explanation and accept either the motto or the verses as fulfilling the second function, then the normal method of the pageant-poets was the same as that of the emblem-writer.<sup>17</sup>

These elaborate allegorical depictions date back to the reign of Henry VI when a pageant was staged to mark his entry into London in 1432.<sup>18</sup> The references to Antonio's ships in *I i* may refer to pageant wagons, or more probably to the pageant barges which took part in the spectacular shows staged on the Thames. These pageants formed 'speaking pictures', formal and emblematic, and were a half-way stage between the emblem books themselves and the use of emblematic imagery on the Elizabethan stage. The dramatist was in a unique position, able to unite both poetry and illustration. Sidney, in his *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) says a verbal description (of for instance an elephant or a complex architectural structure) is not sufficient because it

should never satisfy his inward conceits with being witness to itself of a true lively knowledge; but the same man, as soon as he might see those beasts well painted, or the house well in model, should straightways grow, without need of any description, to a judicial comprehending of them.<sup>19</sup>

Samuel Daniel's translation of *The Worthy tract of Paulus Iovius* (1585) bears this out in his preface *To the Frendly Reader*:

Yet I say, that to represent unto the sence of sight the forme or figure of any thing, is more natural in act, and more common to all creatures then is hearing, and thereupon sayth Aristotle, that we

love the sence of seeing, for that by it we are taught and made to learne more then by any other of our senses, whereby we see that all men naturally take delight in pictures.<sup>20</sup>

Shakespeare was undoubtedly aware of the use emblems could be put to; John Doeblner makes the point that Shakespeare

lived in a world saturated with visual tropes conveyed by paintings, stained-glass windows, tapestries, household objects, and even armor, as well as by widely distributed books and graphics. Thread, printer's ink, and paint were the media for an enormously rich storehouse of conventional motifs, emblems, and impresas.<sup>21</sup>

#### 2.d. Emblems and the drama

The emblem book was, in its own right, an emblem of its time. It reflected the state of knowledge at the period, and classified it into an easily assimilated and convenient construct. It epitomised the Elizabethan love of complexity and wit, the hidden meaning behind the simple façade, and in some cases, layers of hidden meaning, and combined this literary interest with another Elizabethan preoccupation, pictorial statement. In his book *Action is Eloquence: Shakespeare's language of Gesture*, David Bevington points out that the neoplatonic view of symbolism reconciling beauty and truth suited the Elizabethan frame of thought which demanded a harmony between the divine and physical worlds:

Such a "poetic of correspondences" found symbolic meaning in color, spatial arrangement, and gesture - on stage as in the public lives of Renaissance men and women. ... Emblem books, popular in England as on the Continent, encouraged a habit of thought uniting word and picture in a close relationship aptly expressed by the saying attributed to Simonides of Ceos that "painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture." The universal language of emblems appeared in mottoes, coats of arms, mummings, street pageants, morality plays, Lord Mayor's shows, and sermons. The court masque provided a dramatic genre in which pictures and words were closely interrelated, as in the emblem books, by neoplatonic doctrines of correspondence.<sup>22</sup>

Bevington admits that this emblematic cast of thought was pervasive, but goes on to point out that to accept it as being the main source of influence on dramatic writers of the time is to impose a limitation on them which they did not, in fact, feel. 'Elizabethan dramatists' he says 'spoke of their art as chiefly verbal'.<sup>23</sup> While this may be true to a certain extent, it being accepted that they used no illusionistic scenery,<sup>24</sup> the language of the plays, especially those of Shakespeare, encourage the audience to use their imagination, and paint a picture in their heads. The Elizabethan plays are not verbal in the sense that the plays of the nineteenth century dramatists such as Oscar Wilde are verbal. Wilde has

no need, with the nineteenth century use of elaborate illusionistic sets, to paint visual pictures for the audience; they actually see the scene presented. Nor does he have to keep the audience informed of the rapid changes of place and time which Shakespeare incorporates in his plays. Wilde's plays are constructed on witty word-play and little else, whereas in contrast, Shakespeare had to make language convey considerably more than its surface meaning. His text had to paint in the scenery, setting and lighting, and create enough atmosphere for the audience to manufacture its own imaginative scenery. As his theatrical experience increases, and his mastery of language develops, Shakespeare explores the possibilities of the visual immediacy of emblematic pictures to deepen the superficial meaning of the text. He realises that by using familiar images, he can create a whole world within the spectator's mind by triggering by a word or phrase, a series of images which would deepen the texture of the situation presented by invoking the memory. As a dramatist he is able, unlike either the poet or the painter working alone, to illustrate his poetry with both stage pictures and movement/action, and to make verbal comment on the action. Doebler, as already quoted above, makes the point that such multiple layers of meaning were common, and easily understood, by the Renaissance audiences, and Green makes a similar point in reference to Alciati's emblems:

they often serve to bring into a small compass a far more expressive meaning than speech has the power of attaining.<sup>25</sup>

Contrary to what Bevington would have, this use of the familiar emblem does not express a conventional thought. Shakespeare uses the known world of symbol to establish an instant reaction, but characteristically, he sometimes twists the familiar so that it becomes more powerful in the light of what is expected. While the emblem books themselves are conventional, Shakespeare's use of them, as I shall show below, is not.

## 2.e. Major areas of interest in emblem books

While some of the later emblem books return to Brant's idea of making use of a single theme to link all the emblems, as in Christopher Harvey's *Schola cordis or the heart of it selfe* (London, 1647) in which each emblem is centred around an image of the heart, or Robert Farley's *Lychnocausia* (London, 1638) which concentrates on light, most of the emblem books of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are more wide-ranging, and derive their images from a variety of sources. The major areas of

interest spring from classical and mythological characters and stories, animal fables, natural images as shown in plants and trees, proverbial sayings, personifications and sea and shipping images. There are surprisingly few purely biblical emblems, although the emblem books become increasingly religious in their interpretation of images through the sixteenth century. In many cases it is not possible to categorise the source of the emblem because the use of images overlaps, as in the case of Geoffrey Whitney's emblem dedicated to Sir Francis Drake where a historical figure is linked to a mythological one, Jason, and the image of the sea and shipping is also invoked.<sup>26</sup>

#### 2.e.i. Sea and ship images

The image of the sea, both in itself and in connection with ships and sailing, is very popular, and is used to depict a wide variety of moral teachings from the straightforward use of the sea itself as in Whitney's emblem 129 *Constanter* where the sea flooding the earth is seen as an emblem of the constant threat of Satan to overrun man's soul, to the use of shipwreck: Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britanna* gives the emblem *His graviora* which represents Aeneas as an example of the valiant mind for withstanding all misfortune; and the ship itself:<sup>27</sup> P.S.'s translation of *The Heroical Devises of M. Claudius Paradin* uses the image of a ship at sea to represent the nobility of France, originating with the Trojans in *En altera quae vehat Argo*.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Combe, in his *The Theater of Fine Devices* which was a translation of Guillaume de La Perrière's *Le Theatre des bons engins* (Paris, 1539) uses the ship as a comment on woman, 'A woman is of such kind, That nothing can content her mind' likening woman to a ship in that she requires wealth, is never satisfied and will trouble man all his life.<sup>29</sup>

#### 2.e.ii. Classical images

The range of use that the emblem writers put the sea/ships/shipwreck to is immense and often makes links with another favourite source, classical and mythological figures. All the emblem writers use classical characters to illustrate morals. Some of these figures are historical or semi-historical such as P.S.'s use of Alexander where the cutting of the Gordian Knot illustrates that manhood and strength can accomplish apparently difficult tasks<sup>30</sup> and Whitney's use of Agamemnon where Agamemnon's shield showing a lion illustrates his boldness.<sup>31</sup> Other figures are mythological: Cupid is a favourite figure and appears on a great number of emblems;



Huston Diehl, in her *Index of Icons in English Emblem Books 1500-1700*<sup>32</sup> lists 172 instances. H.G. who is probably Sir Henry Godyere, uses in *The Mirrour of Maiestie* Apollo to represent contentment, Jove providence and Minerva wit<sup>33</sup> and Peacham uses Adonis to represent love's hostility to virtue and preference for idleness.<sup>34</sup> Mythological stories are used to illustrate moral truths as in the story of Cupid and the bee, where Cupid is stung trying to obtain honey. The emblematisers point out the moral that love is both pleasurable and painful and Whitney uses the story twice, changing the emphasis very slightly.<sup>35</sup>

#### 2.e.iii. **Animal images**

Another large area of interest for the emblem writers is the animal fable. These cover a wide range of animals, insects, birds and reptiles, some of the most popular being the lion, the wolf, the snake or serpent, the bee, and the ass, but many other animals are used from the ant<sup>36</sup> to the elephant.<sup>37</sup> As with the classical emblems, some animal emblems depict the character of the animal, and some retail a story concerning it. In the former category falls the ermine, which appears in Peacham's *Cui candor morte redemptus* which moralises that, in contrast to the ermine which chooses to be caught by the hunter rather than spoil its white coat, men willingly allow their minds to be defiled.<sup>38</sup> The pelican is used by both Whitney<sup>39</sup> and George Wither<sup>40</sup> to represent the sacrifice of Christ for mankind. In the second category comes Whitney's story of the fox who refused the invitation into the lion's den, noting that although many had entered, none had returned.<sup>41</sup> Whitney also uses several dog fables including the dog in the manger,<sup>42</sup> the dog that barks at the moon<sup>43</sup> and the dog that attacks a stone thrown at it rather than the thrower.<sup>44</sup>

#### 2.e.iv. **Nature images**

The emblems concerning the animal kingdom are not the only images involving the natural world. There are many uses of plant and tree imagery. A favourite plant is the Heliotrope or Marigold, which turns its face towards the sun, and is used to symbolise variously the lover turning to his beloved,<sup>45</sup> man turning to God<sup>46</sup> and the subject turning to the Prince.<sup>47</sup> Such images are based on a real observation of nature, as can be seen by anyone travelling through the fields of southern France in late summer when the sunflowers are in full bloom. Emblems centred on trees are rather more popular than those on plants; there are many emblems which use the oak, the cedar and the vine for instance, but other trees

are also apparent: Georgette de Montenay in *A Booke of armes, or remembrances*<sup>49</sup> uses the Olive tree to represent the possibility of salvation for man if he receives the grace of God, as the Olive tree can be grafted with other fruit.<sup>49</sup> In some cases the same story appears with different trees, as in Whitney's story of the Elm and the Vine,<sup>50</sup> which in Peacham becomes the Grapevine and the Laurel.<sup>51</sup> As in the case of the animal fables, the character of the plant or tree is used to parallel a human situation or character, and to act as either an example or a warning.

#### 2.e.v. Personification images

This is also true of the personifications which the emblem writers use. Whitney's Envy is an amalgam of the attributes of envy, having snakes for hair, bleary eyes, carrying a staff, eating vipers and tearing out her own heart.<sup>52</sup> Peacham depicts Levity as a flamboyantly dressed young man holding a spur, who applies a bellows to his ear<sup>53</sup> and Andrew Willet's Silence is a student who sits alone, with his finger on his lips.<sup>54</sup> The gestures and appearance of such characters are not intended to be naturalistic; they are intended to evoke a specific aspect of human behaviour or character, and by concentrating on this, to heighten the impact.

#### 2.e.vi. Proverbial images

The emblematic depiction of proverbial sayings contains a mixture of natural and symbolic elements; Peacham uses the image most closely associated with death, the skull, to point out that man should remember his mortality and think on his end.<sup>55</sup> Whitney uses the homely emblem of the sieve to represent how the sound judgement of a wise and prudent man should separate good from bad.<sup>56</sup> A less naturalistic image appears in the emblem of a shirt hanging on a spear to show that wealth and power are useless after death which is used by P.S.,<sup>57</sup> Whitney<sup>58</sup> and Wither.<sup>59</sup>

#### 2.e.vii. Emblematic images and Renaissance thought

Such a mixture of natural and symbolic, historical and fantastical, is characteristic of the emblem books published in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century. That the Elizabethans and Jacobean accepted this curious hodge-podge of source material, and assimilated the wide range of images, is clearly a reflection of their ability to cope with multiple levels of complexity and symbolism.

The one connecting thread in all the emblems is their moral quality. They all, whether concerning the sea, matters classical, animal or natural, personifications or proverbial sayings, relate ultimately to man's place in the universe. In this they are themselves a reflection of the Renaissance; of the growing interest in Mankind and the changing emphasis from the insignificance of man in relation to God, towards an understanding of man as made in God's image; a microcosmic version of a macrocosmic Creator. In this shift of viewpoint, man becomes also a microcosmic reflection of the universe, and as such assumes much more interest and importance than he had been assigned in the Medieval system of thought, where man was considered as only a tiny, insignificant part of God's creation. In the philosophy of the Renaissance, man himself becomes important and assumes a position in society only a little lower than the angels. With this new status, the study of man becomes increasingly of interest, and leads ultimately to Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733-4) and the idea that 'The proper study of Mankind is Man'.<sup>60</sup> It is Shakespeare's interest in the psychology of man which leads him to explore the images used by the emblem writers.

## 2.f. Shakespeare's use of emblems

M. C. Bradbrook has said that in *The Merchant of Venice*

Shakespeare makes more direct use than anywhere else of dramatic *impres*a: the bold physical contrasts of the Jew with his curving knife and the boy-Portia in doctor's gown. The splendours of the Doge's court and the moonlight of Belmont would probably be outdone as sheer pageantry on the Elizabethan stage by the highly symbolic casket scenes.<sup>61</sup>

The scenes she describes are undoubtedly illustrative of pageantry, but while such scenes do not appear *in toto* in any emblem book, individual elements like the curved knife point to a direct familiarity with emblem literature, and it is these which are to be discussed in this section.

Shakespeare cannot fail to have been affected by the popular demand for pageantry, both on the large scale in the street and water pageants that were so common, and on the small, private scale in the emblem books and the love of symbolic detail. Henry Green states:

And were it not a fact, as we can show it to be, that Shakespeare quotes the very mottoes and describes the very drawings which the Emblem-books contain, we might, from his highly cultivated taste in other respects, not unreasonably conclude that he must both have known them and have used them.<sup>62</sup>

In *The Merchant of Venice* the use of emblematic images assumes greater importance than has hitherto been evident in Shakespeare's plays. The occasional use of an emblem to make a particular point, as in the examples quoted at the beginning of this chapter on page 16 from *Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, develops in *The Merchant* into a flood of images which recall emblematic literature. In this play Shakespeare makes more obvious use of emblems both in words and in stage pictures to create deeper levels of meaning below what is apparent on the surface than he does in any other play. Once he has fully explored this rich source of visual reference, he is free to use it in more subtle and refined ways, so that in *Hamlet*, for instance, he can repeatedly use a single word image to call up a whole range of meanings.

*The Merchant of Venice* contains Shakespeare's most overt use of emblem book structure in any of his plays, in his depiction of the three caskets, which have a motto, a verse and an object providing the illustration, but he also uses the familiar pictures, mottoes and verses of the emblem books in a more subtle way to call up a whole series of relationships stored in the memories of his audience, without having to detail every idea, much as the ban-the-bomb sign conjures up (at least for those over thirty) not only the essential peace movement, but a picture of a whole culture. The knowledge that a single image can evoke a stream of ideas and emotions is at the root of today's advertising campaigns. Modern advertisers are, however, at pains to conceal their manipulations of the customer's mind, preferring the 'soft sell' to the 'hard sell'. The Elizabethans, in contrast, openly delighted in the complexities of multiple imagery.

### 3. Emblematic images in *The Merchant of Venice*

#### 3.a. Elemental forces: the sea and Shylock

The use of complex imagery is therefore a thing which is less familiar to the modern mind, and perhaps, less easily assimilated, for it requires, as does the staging of Elizabethan drama, a certain kind of suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience. The initial image presented in *The Merchant of Venice* is, however, an easily understood one: the establishment of the image of ships is appropriate as the plot is to hinge on the loss of shipping, and the title instantly alerts the audience to mercantile trade in its references to a 'merchant' and 'Venice'. The latter at this time was still considered to be the hub of mercantile trade, occupying as it did a pivotal position both geographically and culturally

between the Western and Eastern worlds. While firmly a part of Western Europe, Venice had retained its Byzantine links, and its status as a long established Republic allowed it a freedom of action less dominated by Rome than many other Italian cities, and a stable base from which to trade. Its unique situation on the Venetian Lagoon had enabled it to develop a water-based trade which was strengthened by its position at the northern end of the Adriatic, as the most convenient point for ships to dock from the east and trade with European merchants arriving overland from the west.

However, deeper than the literal references to mercantile trade are the related symbols connected with ships and the sea. The recurrent images of shipwreck and storm create an ambience of threatening possibilities in which the harmony and order of life has become unbalanced. Such instability has the unsettling effect of admitting otherwise unthinkable consequences, and the outcome of Shylock's suit can no longer be a certain defeat. For a supposed comedy, the threat of danger is an unusually constant presence.

The sea is the ultimate metaphor for appearance and reality: it may seem calm and safe on the surface, but it contains dangerous currents and undertows, and creatures which can be either beneficial, as fish for food, or menacing, as the legendary 'monsters of the deep'. It is also a symbol of almost unlimited power; a dangerous and relentless enemy, although it can appear calm, innocent and welcoming. Right at the beginning of the play the dangers of trusting to appearance are therefore established, and when Shylock is later revealed as an elemental force in his desire for revenge, and is linked by Antonio with the sea itself:

You may as well go stand upon the beach  
And bid the main flood bate his usual height ...  
... As seek to soften ...  
His Jewish heart!

(IV i 71-72, 79-80)

the idea has already been sown in the audience's mind. Shakespeare has already linked the danger of the sea with the danger of human ambition and greed in *3 Henry VI* where Queen Margaret's speech which begins Act V scene iv presents an extended metaphor which relates her cause to a ship tossed on the unrelenting sea of the York brothers:

And what is Edward but a ruthless sea?  
What Clarence but a quicksand of deceit?  
And Richard but a ragged fatal rock?  
All these the enemies to our poor bark.  
Say you can swim; alas, 'tis but a while!  
Tread on the sand; why, there you quickly sink.

Bestride the rock; the tide will wash you off,  
 Or else you famish - that's a threefold death ...  
 ... there's no hop'd-for mercy with the brothers  
 More than with ruthless waves, with sands and rocks.

(3 *Henry VI V* iv 25-32, 35-36)

The speech, which takes up the first 38 lines of the scene is too long to quote in full, but sustains the image for its whole length. Later in the same play Henry VI uses the same image in reference to Richard:

I, Daedalus; my poor boy, Icarus;  
 Thy father, Minos, that denied our course;  
 The sun that sear'd the wings of my sweet boy,  
 Thy brother Edward; and thyself, the sea  
 Whose envious gulf did swallow up his life.

3 *Henry VI V* vi 21-25)

Like Richard, Shylock is seen as ruthless, impervious to the difficulties of others and relentless in pursuing his own goals. Shylock becomes as mindless in his desire for revenge as the sea, although not as disinterested.

Salerio's second speech in the play<sup>63</sup> is not a comforting vision of the sea; it establishes the dangers of trade connected with that element. At the same time that the danger of the sea is registered, Antonio is presented as a wise and prudent man, dividing his argosies and not trusting entirely to fortune. As such he represents the 'good man' and by analogy, the Christian. The relationship between the ship and the Church is highlighted by Salerio's reference to it, but the reversal of the conventional image, and a witty play on the Church as the 'rock of salvation' dislocates the sense of familiarity with the images and forces the spectator to view them afresh.

### 3.a.i. Ships and shipping

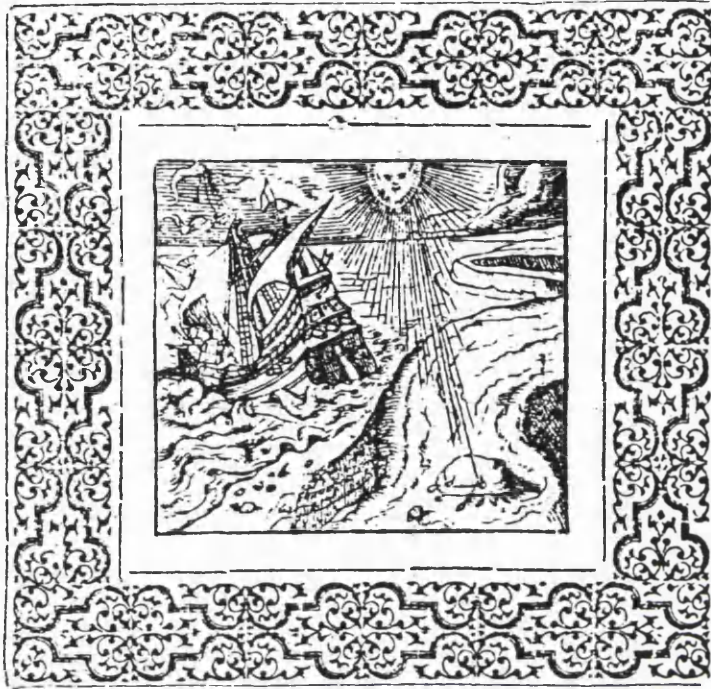
At the very beginning of *The Merchant of Venice* we are reminded of the pageantry of Elizabethan England. The description of Antonio's argosies

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.

(I i 10-13)

refers not only to the usual mercantile river traffic, but also to the much more resplendent and impressive pageant barges which were a regular feature of festivities on the Thames. However, the first 45 lines of scene one work on several levels: they introduce the mercantile theme and the sea-going atmosphere, but also establish Antonio's leanings towards melancholy. Salerio's first speech introduces the image of the sailing

II

*Res humana in summo declinant.*

**T**HE gallante Shipp, that cutts the azure surge,  
 And hathe both tide, and wished windes, at will:  
 Her tackle sure, with shotte her foes to vrge,  
 With Captaines boulder, and marriners of skill,  
 With streamers, flagges, topgallantes, pendants braue,  
 When Seas do rage, is swallowed in the waue.

The snowe, that falles vppon the mountaines greate,  
 Though on the Alpes, which seeme the clowdes to reache.  
 Can not indure the force of Phœbus heate,  
 But wastes awaie, Experience doth vs teache:  
 Which warneth all, on Fortunes wheele that clime  
 To beare in minde how they haue but a time.

*Pasibus ambigua fortuna volubilis errat;  
 Et manet in nullo certa, tenaxq, loco.  
 Sed modo lata manet, vultus modo sumit acerbos  
 Et tantum constans in leuitate sua est.*

B 2

*Frustra.*

Periand. per  
 Aufon.  
 Si fortuna inuas.  
 cauto tolle.  
 Si fortuna tonas.  
 cauto mergi.

Ouidius 4.  
 pont. 3.  
 Tu quoque sue  
 timet, & qua  
 sibi lata cadunt  
 Dum loquens,  
 fieri tristitia possi  
 puta.

Ouidius 5.  
 Trist. 9.

1. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (Leyden, 1586)  
 'Res humanæ in summo declinant', p. 11

ship and Solanio's reply arouses an awareness of the risks involved in maritime ventures. Salerio's rejoinder is full of vivid imagery and establishes the threatening images at the beginning of the play: the pictures he invokes describe alternately homely images; cooling broth, an hour glass and a church, and he links with these threatening elements which all relate to shipwrecks. The juxtaposition of the domestic and dangerous, which are verbally linked, strengthens the sense of impending doom. At first sight nothing could be more suitable to a play about Venetian merchants than warnings of the dangers of shipwreck, but ship imagery also has a string of emblematic meanings relating to love, fortune, constancy and Christianity, all of which have direct relevance to the themes of *The Merchant of Venice*.

### 3.a.ii. Fortune

Probably the most influential of the English emblem books was Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* which had English verses illustrated by woodcuts. Of 248 emblems, 86 derive directly from Alciati.<sup>64</sup> Whitney's emblem *Res humanae in summo declinent* [Illustration 1] which Green translates as 'At their summit human affairs decline' explores the idea of the Wheel of Fortune and its fickle nature:

The gallante Shipp, that cutts the azure surge,  
And hathe both tide, and wisshed windes, at will:  
Her tackle sure, with shotte her foes to urge,  
With Captaines boulde, and marriners of skill,  
With streamers, flagges, topgallantes, pendants brave,  
When Seas do rage, is swallowed in the wave.

The snowe, that falles uppon the mountaines greate,  
Though on the Alpes, which seeme the clowdes to reache,  
Can not indure the force of Phoebus heate,  
But wastes awaie, Experience doth us teache:  
Which warneth all, on Fortunes wheele that clime  
To beare in minde how they have but a time.<sup>65</sup>

Again the image is one of warning and presupposes the danger to one who is at the mercy of Fortune. The emblem warns that however well prepared and skilled man is, he cannot avoid a fall in his fortunes. This is exactly what will happen to Antonio. He assures Salerio and Solanio that it is not worry about his argosies that makes him sad, that his

ventures are not in one bottom trusted,  
Nor to one place: nor is my whole estate  
Upon the fortune of this present year:

(I i 42-44)

Ironically he has just thanked Fortune for this, but the danger warned of in the emblem will manifest during the play, and the Wheel of Fortune will turn, casting down Antonio with the loss of his ships and the threatened



loss of his life, while Shylock rises, only to be cast down in his turn when Antonio regains his life and his ships.

Petrarch's *Physicke Against Fortune*,<sup>66</sup> translated into English by Thomas Twyne in 1579 uses the images of calm and storm to warn against the dangers of complacency in good fortune:

*'Of fortunate sayling'*

Ioy: I Sayle prosperously  
Reason: I perceive the matter, Neptune layeth snares for thee  
Ioy: The Sea hath shewed it selfe calme unto me  
Reason: A deceitful calmenesse, and as I may terme it, a bayte for shypwracke: For yf the sea were alwayes rough, no man would venture upon it ... doest thou attribute firmenesse to the Sea, as if thou dissembledst thy senses: trust it not, to tempt fortune oftentimes, is meere madnesse.<sup>67</sup>

While Antonio steers his ship steadily, and is prepared to accept what fortune deals out to him, Fortune is traditionally seen as a fickle mistress and the Wheel of Fortune, so often depicted in emblematic literature, turns regardless of the merit or otherwise of the subject. To take for granted good fortune, or to rail against misfortune, is seen equally as foolishly dangerous and futile. Brant sees the man who fights against fortune as a member of his Ship of Fools; in his stanzas on *Contempt of Misfortune* he relates Fortune and sailing:

*A fool is he who does not see,  
When dogged by mishap he may be,  
That wisely he must be resigned;  
Misfortune will not be declined.*

Misfortune makes sighs numerous  
And yet it's sought by many of us,  
Hence never should a man complain  
When boats are wrecked in stormy main ...  
... 'Tis better ne'er to start a thing,  
One knows not what its end will bring.  
Whoe'er would travel o'er the sea  
To luck and weather let him see.  
He'll make false headway rapidly  
Who travels 'gainst the wind at sea.  
With friendly wind the wise man sails,  
A fool upsets his ship and fails.  
The wise man firmly holds in hand  
The rudder, then he reaches land.  
A fool has learned no navigation  
And often suffers ruination,  
A wise man pilots friends and all;  
Ere he's aware, a fool will fall ...  
... Those prizing wisdom, virtue grand,  
Though naked, they will swim to land.<sup>68</sup>

Reading Shylock in terms of Brant, Shylock 'makes false headway rapidly', but his motives are corrupt and when he falls into Portia's trap he 'upsets his ship and fails' and ultimately 'suffers ruination'. As the verse warns 'tis better ne'er to start a thing, One knows not what its end will bring'. This, of course, is using a modern translation not accessible to Shakespeare, but two rather free translations of Brant into English were printed in 1509; *The Ship of Fooles, wherein is shewed the folly of all States, with divers other workes adioyned unto the same, very profitable and fruitfull for all men*, by Alexander Barclay, and a prose version by Thomas Watson, *the Shyppe of fooles*, and both were to prove very popular, running through several editions. Barclay's version has more merit, and the edition printed in 1570 translates Brant's verse in *Of the despising of misfortune*:

He is not ware but bare without wisdome,  
That can not consider surely in his minde,  
That when one ill is paste as bad may after come,  
If he him ieoparde to suche like storme and winde,  
Let suche not thinke it thinge agaynst kinde,  
Nor any mervayle if their ship without ore,  
Mast and sayle, be drowned rent and tore ...

... Who that dare adventure or ieoparde for to rowe  
Upon the sea swelling by waves great and hye  
In a weake vessell, had nede that winde should blowe  
Still, soft and calme, least that he finally  
And also his ship stande in great ieopardie,  
Throwen with the floudes on the sea depe and wide,  
And drowned at the laste, or rent the side fro side ...

... But he is wise and so men may him call,  
Which hath not alway his trust and confidence  
In unsure fortune and chaunces unequall,  
And of the same can beware by prudence,  
That man is happy, and shall flye the violence  
And furour of the sea, though it mucche roughly move,  
And with his ship enter the heavenly port above.<sup>69</sup>

Antonio makes it plain that he has not entrusted all his fortune to one enterprise and that this is not what makes him sad; nevertheless, he is not the 'happy' man of Barclay's verse, and all his prudence will not save him from the suffering that is to be visited on him at the agency of Shylock. In the end, however, he exhibits the characteristics of the wise man in succumbing to fortune rather than fighting it. He is prepared to die, indeed, he seems almost eager to do so, and at this moment, at the nadir of the turn of the wheel, his fortune changes and he is brought into safe harbour. To emphasise this, it is revealed that three of his argosies have been miraculously saved. The point is not belaboured; Portia mentions it almost in passing; but it is sufficient to remind the audience that

Antonio, the merchant, is symbolised by his ships - their loss is his loss, not only materially, but spiritually, and their gain reflects his own salvation.

### 3.a.iii. Fortitude

This image relating man's life to a voyage appears in another of Whitney's emblems involving yet again the image of a ship in danger, *Constantia comes victorise*

The shippe, that longe uppon the sea dothe saile,  
And here, and there, with varrijng windes is toste:  
On rockes, and sandes, in daunger ofte to quaile,  
Yet at the lengthe, obtaines the wished coaste:  
Which beinge wonne, the trompetts ratlinge blaste,  
Dothe teare the skie, for ioye of perills paste.

Thoughe master reste, thoughe Pilotte take his ease,  
Yet nighte, and day, the ship her course dothe keepe:  
So, whilst that man dothe saile theise worldlie seas,  
His voyage shortes: althoughe he wake, or sleepe.  
And if he keepe his course directe, he winnes  
That wished porte, where lastinge ioye beginnes.<sup>70</sup>

This likens man's life to a ship battling through life's storms and dangerous rocks but keeping to a straight course and so finally gaining a safe harbour. As in all of Whitney's emblems which have their origin in Alciati, the meaning is expanded and elaborated on. Alciati's Emblem *Spex proxima* is simpler:

Our state is buffeted by countless storms  
and there is only one hope for its future safety;  
and not unlike a ship in the midst of the sea which the winds  
snatch, it is already breaking up in the salt water,  
But if the shining stars, the brothers of Helen - Castor and Pollux  
- should appear  
good hope restores the sinking spirits.<sup>71</sup>

The meaning, although not directly stated, is a religious one, as is more clearly shown in the Italian translation of Alciati by Marquale, published in 1551:

Like the ship in the middle of the sea, battered by the waves and the fury of the winds, such is our life, without a single support, beaten by pains and torments. If the divine lights shining from above, the only support in this mortal sea, do not support the ship always, it cannot, from its wrong course, hope to arrive in port.<sup>72</sup>

The man who sets his sights on God, and follows the straight and narrow path will qualify for, as Whitney puts it, 'lastinge ioye' in heaven.<sup>73</sup> Peacham relates constancy with courage, and emphasises the danger and discomfort which must be overcome by the 'valiant mind':

The valiant mind, whome nothing can dismay,  
The losse of frendes, of goods, or long exile  
From native countrie, perils on the Sea,

Night-watchings, hunger, thirst, and howerly toile,  
 Takes courage, and the same abideth fast,  
 With resolution, even unto the last.

Such shew'd himselfe, AENEAS unto those  
 Of his poore remnant, on the *Tyrrhene Seas*;  
 When even dispaire, their eies began to close,  
 We greater brutes, have borne (quoth he) then these:  
 And God, (my Mates,) when he shall please will send,  
 Unto our greatest miseries an end.<sup>74</sup>

The emphasis is on endurance. By stoically bearing all that fortune has to hurl at one, eventually such patience and constancy will be rewarded. The idea can be found exemplified in Chaucer's story of Patient Griselda<sup>75</sup> among others, and proves to be one that catches the imagination of the emblem writers, who use it repeatedly. Its popularity may stem from the fact that it encapsulates both a Christian and a classical philosophy. The Christian idea of patiently bearing what God sends as a kind of test of holiness which finds its clearest illustration in the story of Job,<sup>76</sup> is here linked with the classical philosophy of the stoics. Such a consonance between Christian and classical ideas would have been most attractive to Renaissance scholars who were keen to assimilate the classical virtues and philosophies into a Christian framework.

Antonio follows this stoical course with the added sacrifice that his suffering is on behalf of another; he is prepared to die to honour the bond made to finance his friend. The importance of honour is outlined by Laurence Stone who states:

A relic of late medieval ideas about chivalry, [honour] demanded public recognition of individual worth, a high reputation in the peer-group world of gentlemen as a person deserving respect and 'worship'. This honour was best achieved and maintained by ... a scrupulous maintenance of good faith, backed by good lineage origins and good marriage conditions. One's honour was something worth fighting for and even dying for to protect.<sup>77</sup>

This classical attitude is reflected in the references in Alciati to Castor and Pollux, rather than to a Christian God, but this is more evidence of the common mixing of classical and Christian meanings in an age which was exploring the renaissance of classical values and developing its own neoplatonism, and Peacham finds no difficulty in imposing a Christian God on his classical Aeneas. Antonio does have to learn something about the Christian virtue of charity before he can resume his straight path, and this he does through the prompting of Portia during the trial.

## 3.a.iv. Petrarch and the ship image

I shall argue here that the common associations with ships have, in *The Merchant of Venice*, a particular Petrarchan significance. For Elizabethan readers of poetry the sailing ship commonly represented a difficult passage in love. Petrarch uses the idea several times, the most famous being his sonnet 189 *Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio*, in which he likens his state to a storm-tossed ship:

My vessel, cargod with oblivion, cleaves  
 The boisterous deep, under cold midnight skies,  
 And mine old enemy, Love, the tiller plies,  
 While Scylla hisses and Charybdis heaves;  
 At every oar imagination weaves  
 Fancies that both the storm and death despise;  
 A humid and eternal wind of sighs  
 Wails through my sails and shatters as it grieves  
 Torrents of tears and clouds of chilling scorn  
 Wash and relax the shrouds so overworn,  
 Of ignorance and error intertwined;  
 The two dear lights which beaconed me are blind;  
 Reason and Art the waves to death have torn,  
 No hope or harbour comforts heart or mind.<sup>79</sup>

Petrarch's sonnet links love with the ship and it is significant that the danger of love/sailing is emphasised. This is no smooth, peaceful passage, and Salerio's use of similar images of wreck and storm indicate that Antonio's passage through the play will not be smooth either.

Petrarch's sonnets achieved a burst of popularity in both Italy and France at the beginning of the sixteenth century, which coincided with, and possibly instigated, a series of twenty seven poems by Wyatt which were based on the *Canzoniere*, about half of which were relatively faithful translations, and the rest of which used the Petrarchan sonnets as a springing off point, or a framework.<sup>79</sup> It is through these and subsequent translations and paraphrases of Petrarch that the latter became popular in England. Wyatt's translation of *Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio* is close to the original:

My galley charged with forgetfulness  
 Thorough sharp seas in winter nights doth pass  
 Tween rock and rock; and eke mine enemy, alas,  
 That is my lord, steereth with cruelty;  
 And every oar a thought in readiness,  
 As though that death were light in such a case;  
 An endless wind doth tear the sail apace  
 Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness.  
 A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain  
 Hath done the wearied cords great hinderance,  
 Wreathed with error and eke with ignorance.  
 The stars be hid that led me to this pain;  
 Drowned is reason that should me comfort,

And I remain despairing of the port.<sup>80</sup>

The idea of linking the tempests of love with storm-tossed ships proved popular and was used by numerous poets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Shakespeare himself in sonnets 80, 86 and 116. Wyatt's sonnet expresses the image of the pain and anguish of storm and shipwreck in a romantic context. Salerio's speech deals with the same images in a literal sense, suggesting that Antonio is afraid for his argosies, and although he denies this, and shortly also repudiates the idea that his melancholy is caused by love, the proximity of the two suggestions and their denials nevertheless links the two ideas. One of the causes of Antonio's downfall, his 'shipwreck', is not because he has himself fallen in love, which he vehemently denies, but because he overextends his financial credit in order to further Bassanio's love for and wooing of Portia.

The images of sea and tempest were not, however, limited to romantic contexts. Petrarch himself uses such images throughout his philosophical tract, *Physicke against Fortune*, where Reason backs up his arguments with sea and tempest metaphors. The voyage thus becomes one of life, rather than one of love, and as such is a favourite metaphor for the progress of the Christian.

### 3.a.v. The Christian voyage

The idea of the Christian engaged on a voyage finds development in the consideration of the image of the ship itself. Brant's idea of a *ship* of fools was not new and may have related to the use of floats and pageant wagons or to Christ in St. Ursula's ship of penitence,<sup>81</sup> but the ship was also a symbol of the Church itself. Willet relates the Church to a ship by way of Noah's Ark:

Noah's old and auncient arke,  
Doth represent Christs little barke,  
For as the Lord did Noah teach,  
The Church doth here Christ onely preach,  
Without the ship they perish all,  
Without the Church men erre and fall, ...  
... with flood and weather th'Arke is tost,  
So is the Church but nothing lost,  
For as the pitch the ship doth keepe,  
So faith preserveth in perils deepe.<sup>82</sup>

The Christian is seen as being safe in his ship, the Church, whatever danger is offered by the sea and the weather, but those *outside* the ship of the Church will 'erre and fall' and ultimately perish. Shylock, as a

Jew, is outside the protection of the Church, and is therefore doomed. His position as an 'outsider' or alien is a significant element in the play and will be fully discussed in the chapter below on The Jew: Alien and Usurer.

The Ship of Fools expressed the idea of sailing for itself as opposed to the Church/ship which involved navigation, a conceit representing the movement of the soul from transition through evolution to salvation.<sup>93</sup> This is shown clearly in Watson's comments in his *Shyppe of fooles* on *The dyspraysynge of his unfortune*:

For to have ones fote surely one must loke where he setteth it for oftentymes fortune hydeth her under the fote of the man for even so as the man wyll go upon the see she waxeth and swelleth. Wherefore he is a fole that entreth in to to [sic] the shyp that may not susteyne the wawes nor a lytell wynde the whiche oftentymes peryssheth thrughe haboundaunce of tempeste and orage. And thus the foole receyveth grete dommage dyvers tymes thrughe his folyshnes bycause that he can not governe it. But the wyse man kepeth hym from the daungers aforesayde in eschewynge the orages of the see that maye happen. Wherefore every body that thynketh to go upon the see ought to have a sure and a stronge shyppe to the ende that it maye resyst agaynst the wawes and tempestes. Wherefore synners consyder the unfortunes of this worlde and amende your lyves to the ende that ye be of the well fortunede in the realme of paradyse.<sup>94</sup>

Here the ship itself assumes importance. To apply Watson's terms to the characters in *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio, as a Christian, is on board the right ship, although he has to sail through a storm before the end. Shylock has embarked on the leaky ship of Judaism; his faith in righteousness will be wrecked, to use another metaphor, on the rock of Christian salvation. The image of the ship as the Church would relate to the idea, expressed by various critics, of Antonio as the Church, Christ or Everyman.<sup>95</sup> But at the beginning of the play, Antonio is not the perfect, complete Christian: like Bunyan's Christian,<sup>96</sup> he has a journey to make and perils to face which will shape him. His melancholy will be developed later by Shakespeare into the deeper emotions of Hamlet, and Hamlet's remark that

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will

(*Hamlet* V ii 10-11)

applies also to Antonio. Antonio has to follow the course plotted for him, as does Shylock, in order to learn about himself. In his speech at the beginning of the play, Salerio twists the image to create an inversion by relating the church not to the ship but to the rocks that will wreck the vessel, and it is Antonio's religion which brings him perilously close to ruin if Shylock's 'I hate him for he is a Christian' (I iii 37) can be

believed. Persecution is the stuff on which martyrs are founded, and Antonio's willing acceptance of this role in the trial scene establishes him as a type of Christ. However, it is also his religion that will ultimately restore his safety and defeat Shylock for, as a Christian citizen of Venice, any attempt on his life is a capital crime, and Shylock's enforced conversion will ensure that no similar bargains will be struck by him again.

### 3.b. Classical emblems

#### 3.b.1. Pine trees and *hubris*

In the passage partly quoted already on p.30 above, Antonio argues that to expect Shylock to give up his suit is useless, using initially sea-images, but going on to refer to other emblems:

You may as well go stand upon the beach  
 And bid the main flood bate his usual height;  
 You may 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  
 To wag their high tops, and to make no noise  
 When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven:  
 You may as well do any thing most hard  
 As seek to soften that - than which what's harder? -  
 His Jewish heart. (IV i 71-80)

The use of lupine imagery will be fully discussed later in the chapter, but at this point the discussion will centre on another group of emblems, those derived from classical sources. The image of mountain pines appears in Whitney:

The loftie Pine, that one the mountaine growes,  
 And spreades her armes, with braunches freshe, and greene,  
 The raging windes, on sodaine overthrowes,  
 And makes her stoope, that longe a farre was seene:  
 So they, that truste to muche in fortunes smiles,  
 Thoughe worlde do laughe, and wealthe doe moste abounde,  
 When leste they thinke, are often snar'de with wyles,  
 And from alofte, doo hedlonge fall to grounde:  
 Then put no truste, in anie worldlie thinges,  
 For frowninge fate, throwes downe the mightie kinges.<sup>87</sup>

Antonio does not use the image in this way, but it applies very well to him. He has relied on fortune to return his ships in good time, and well laden, and it seems that his 'wealthe doe moste abounde', but when he falls, he is 'snar'de with wyles' that Shylock has prepared. At this precise moment in the play it seems that the verse applies only to Antonio, but when Portia turns the table on Shylock, it then fits his situation equally well.



The emblem represents the classical idea of *hubris*, which inevitably results in downfall. For P.S. and Peacham, as well as Whitney, the pine tree symbolises the proud and haughty man who thinks his good fortune is such that nothing can harm him. Peacham also includes a brief reference to the sea waves:

Who wouldst dispend in Happines thy daies,  
And lead a life, from cares exempt and free,  
See that thy mind, stand irremov'd alwaies,  
Through reason grounded on firme constancie,  
For whom opinion doth unstaiedly sway,  
To fortune soonest, such become a pray.

Ye loftie Pines, that doe support the state,  
Of common wealthes, and mightie government,  
Why stoope ye soon'st, unto the blast of fate,  
And fawne on Envie, to your ruine bent:  
Be taught by me, to scorne your worser happe,  
The wave by Sea, or land the Thunderclap.<sup>88</sup>

and P.S. relates the idea to Divine justice, rather than the classical personification of Fortune, although he makes it clear that the original image stems from a classical source. God, he states, punishes the proud, arrogant and selfish person and bestows grace on the humble and lowly

Wherein he seemeth to imitate the lightning, which leaveth untouched things that are low, and striking those that are loftie and high, as Horace in these wordes beareth record.

The pine apple tree is tost with windes,  
and haughtie turrets soone do fall,  
The lightning eke doth fiercelie beate,  
the mountaines high and tall.<sup>89</sup>

Petrarch, too, quotes Horace's imagery in Dialogue 17 of *Physicke* for the same purpose:

Ioy: I was borne aloft  
Reason: Thou are subiect to tempestes and whyrlewyndes, and hope of lying hyd is taken from thee. Pythie is the saying of the Lyrike Poet: *The mightie Pine tree is often shaken with windes, and high towres fall with the greater force, and the lyghtnyng striketh the hyghest Mountaines.*<sup>90</sup>

Shakespeare uses the emblem in *2 Henry VI*, when Suffolk refers to Gloucester's fall from favour in terms which make it clear that he regards pride as the source of Gloucester's disgrace through his wife Eleanor:

Thus droops this lofty pine and hangs his sprays;  
Thus Eleanor's pride dies in her youngest days.

(*2 Henry VI* II iii 45-46)

By many Strokes, that Worke is done,  
Which cannot be perform'd at One.

29



ILLVSTR. XXIX.

Book. I.

**D**Espaire not *Man*, in what thou oughtst to doe,  
Although thou faile when one *Attempt* is made ;  
But, adde a *New Endeavour* thereunto,  
And, then another, and another, adde :  
Yea, till thy Pow'r and Life shall quite be spent,  
Perfit in seeking what thou shouldst desire ;  
For, he that falleth from a good *Intent*,  
Deserves not that, to which he did aspire.  
Rich *Treasures*, are by *Nature*, placed deepe ;  
And, ere we gaine them, we must pierce the *Rockes* :  
Such *Perills*, also, them, as *Guardians* keepe,  
That, none can winne them without wounds and knockes.  
Moreover, *Glories*, *Thrones* are so sublime,  
That, whosoever thinks their Top to gaine,  
Till many thousand weary steps he clime,  
Doth foole himselfe, by Musings which are vaine.

And, yet, there is a *Path way*, which doth leade  
Above the highest things that *Man* can see ;  
And (though it be not knowne to all who tread  
The *Common-Tract*) it may ascended be.  
As, therefore, none should greater things presume  
Then well become their strength ; So, none should feare  
(Through *Folly*, *Sloth*, or *Basenesse*) to assume  
Those things upon them, which be seeming are.  
In *Time*, and by *Degrees* may things be wrought,  
That seem'd impossible to have beene done,  
When they were first conceived in the thought ;  
And, such as these, we may adventure on.

Mine *Arme*, I know, in time will fell an *Oke* ;  
But, I will nev'r attempt it, at a *Stroke*.

Afflictions

The pine is not the only tree to have emblematic meanings which Shakespeare makes use of. He uses a similar idea of pride and power, represented by the oak tree, as being susceptible to the axe:

But Hercules himself must yield to odds;  
And many strokes, though with a little axe,  
Hews down and fells the hardest-timber'd oak.

(3 *Henry VI* II i 53-55)

This image can be found in Vaenius' *Amorum Emblemata*:

Not with one stroke at first the great tree goes to grownd,  
But it by manie strokes is made to fall at last,  
The drop doth pierce the stone by falling long and fast,  
So by enduring long long soght-for love is found.<sup>91</sup>

and in Ayres' *Emblemata Amatoris*<sup>92</sup> and in Wither's emblem XXIX, Book 1  
[Illustration 2]

By many Strokes, that Worke is done,  
Which cannot be perform'd at One ...

... In Time and by Degrees may things be wrought,  
That seem'd impossible to have beene done,  
When they were first conceived in the thought;  
And, such as these, we may adventure on.

Mine Arme, I know, in time will fell an Oke;  
But, I will nev'r attempt it, at a Stroke.<sup>93</sup>

The oak appears again in the same play, but this time as overshadowed by the cedar:

Thus yields the cedar to the axe's edge,  
Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle,  
Under whose shade the ramping lion slept,  
Whose top-branch overpeer'd Jove's spreading tree  
And kept low shrubs from winter's pow'rful wind.

(3 *Henry VI* V ii 11-15)

where Warwick, who is dying, sees himself as the cedar which has overlooked 'Jove's spreading tree', the oak, and protected the lower orders. He believes he has been a faithful friend to his prince, and in Willet's *Animi constantia* the cedar and the oak appear together as an image of constancy:

The Cedar in Lebanon and the oke  
Doe constancie both teach  
The wind cannot give such a stroke  
To make in them a breach,  
Gods countenance so can not change,  
And righteous men thinke nothing strange.<sup>94</sup>

Shakespeare, however, twists this idea of constancy, for Warwick has not, in fact, been true to his Prince: he has allowed himself to be stung by the humiliation of Edward's marriage while he was, himself, negotiating for a French bride for the King, and in retaliation at the hurt becomes

involved in a situation where he was at war with the King's forces. Ultimately, his pride has brought about his downfall and death.

A gentler image of the tree which appears in Whitney can be found in Shakespeare's references to the elm. Whitney's emblem runs as follows:

A Withered Elme, whose boughes weare bare of leaves  
 And sappe, was sunke with age into the roote:  
 A fruictefull vine, unto her bodie cleaves,  
 Whose grapes did hange, from toppe unto the foote:  
 And when the Elme, was rotten, drie, and dead,  
 His branches still, the vine abowt it spread.  
  
 Which shoves, wee shoulde be linck'de with such a frende,  
 That might revive, and helpe when wee bee oulde:  
 And when wee stoope, and drawe unto our ende,  
 Our staggering state, to helpe for to uphoulde:  
 Yea, when wee shall be like a fencelesse block,  
 That for our sakes, will still imbrace our stock.<sup>95</sup>

Whitney's emblem is close to its source in Alciati,<sup>96</sup> but Shakespeare's use of the emblem relates usually to relationships between opposite sexes, rather than to friendship between members of the same sex and is therefore more closely related to Vaenius' emblem on the theme:

The vyne doth still embrace the elme by age ore-past,  
 Which did in former tyme those feeble stalks uphold,  
 And constantly remaynes with it now beeing old,  
 Love is not kild by death, that after death doth last.<sup>97</sup>

The most extended reference in Shakespeare, in *The Comedy of Errors*, has already been quoted at the beginning of this chapter, where Adriana relates her husband to the elm and herself to the vine, but the image is also touched on in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
 Gently entwist; the female ivy so  
 Enrings the baky fingers of the elm. (IV i 39-41)

where Titania is winding her arms around the rustic figure of Bottom. In *2 Henry IV* Shakespeare twists the emblem when Poins refers to Falstaff as 'thou dead elm' (II iv 319). The implication is that Falstaff is rotten, and is therefore unreliable as a support. The emblematic context suggests that Falstaff's expectation is that the Prince will be the vine to his elm, and in turn support him, but in fact the opposite is true. When Hal eventually succeeds to the throne, he disowns any knowledge of Falstaff, although he does arrange privately to provide him with an allowance.<sup>98</sup> Although the relationship between Bassanio and Antonio would seem to be tailor-made for the idea, with the latter as the elm who, once strong, is being threatened with destruction, and Bassanio as the vine who grows in Antonio's strength and later offers to support him with Portia's money,

earned by Antonio's own sacrifice, Shakespeare does not use it. His rejection of this image may be a reflection of the deliberate weakening of the friendship between Antonio and Bassanio in order that Bassanio's relationship with Portia can develop fully.

### 3.b.ii. The Golden Fleece

As the pine has been linked with the main flood; so the sea and ships link Portia with the classical image of the golden fleece.<sup>99</sup> Shakespeare makes reference to the venturing of merchants after fabulous goods; Portia, with her 'sunny locks' and her rich setting presents a picture of a valuable prize. She is first seen in her grand house, which although not described in detail, is strongly implied in the luxury of the caskets themselves, and the smoothly running household. The golden fleece of her hair is a symbol of her wealth, and the requirement to venture the casket trial for her hand relates to the risks run by the merchant venturers in their search for trade.

The emblem of the Golden Fleece was commonplace, but Whitney, who uses the image in three ways, first develops it in an emblem which is unique to him: *Auxilio divino* identifies Sir Francis Drake with Jason:

Throughe scorchinge heate, throughe coulde, in stormes, and tempests  
force,  
By ragged rocks, by shelves, and sandes: this Knighte did keepe his  
course.

By gaping gulfes hee pass'd, by monsters of the flood,  
By pirattes, theeves, and cruell foes, that long'd to spill his blood.  
That wonder greate to scape: but GOD was on his side,  
And throughe them all, in spite of all, his shaken shippe did guide.  
And, to requite his paines: *By helpe of power devine.*  
His happe, at lengthe did aunswere hope, to finde the goulden mine.  
Let GRAECIA then forbear, to praise her IASON boulder?  
Who throughe the watchfull dragons pass'd, to win the fleece of  
goulder.

Since MEDEAS helpe, they weare inchaunted all,  
And IASON without perrilles, pass'd: the conqueste therfore small?  
But, hee, of whome I write, this noble minded DRAKE,  
Did bringe away his goulden fleece, when thousand eies did wake.  
Wherefore, yee woorthie wightes, that seeke for forreine landes:  
Yf that you can, come alwise home, by GANGES goulden sandes.  
And you, that live at home, and can not brooke the flood,  
Geve praise to them, that passe the waves, to doe their cuntries  
good.

Before which sorte, as chiefe: in tempeste, and in calme,  
Sir FRANCIS DRAKE, by due deserte, may weare the goulden palme.<sup>100</sup>

Drake was, of course, to the Elizabethan, the arch-adventurer. The emblem celebrates Drake's circumnavigation of the world - the first by an Englishman - which had taken two years and ten months. He landed in

Plymouth on 26 September, 1580. The voyage made Drake a hero. *The Golden Hind* was put on show at Deptford, and was visited by large numbers of eager sightseers as late as the reign of James I.<sup>101</sup> Drake was also a kind of legal pirate, preying on Spanish ships, and his adventurous spirit was a source of admiration to Whitney's contemporaries. For the land-bound, the sea offered danger and adventure, and for merchants, considerable, if risky, profit. Once again the emblems presented in the play introduce a sense of threat as Bassanio ventures forth to win Portia in the style of the merchant who risks the dangers of the sea in order to gain the great prize. That Shakespeare intends his audience to make the connection between Bassanio and Jason is evident from the former's description of Portia in I i:

... her sunny locks  
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,  
 Which makes her seat of Belmont Cholchos' strond,  
 And many Jasons come in quest of her. (I i 169-172)

and Gratiano's remark in III ii 243 'We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece'. Whitney compares Drake with Jason, and a relationship between Drake and Bassanio would be logical as Bassanio is presented as an adventurer (this is not meant in the strictly mercenary sense). The sense of risking everything to gain a great prize is present in the images of all three, and is underlined in Bassanio's case by the motto of the lead casket, '*Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath*'.

Peacham also uses the image of Jason to convey the idea of adventuring for a prize:

The Dread-nought Argo, cuts the foaming surge,  
 Through daungers great, to get the golden prize,  
 So when our selves, Necessitie doth urge,  
 We should avoide ignoble Cowardize,  
 And undertake with pleasure, any paine,  
 Whereby we might our wealth, or honour gaine.<sup>102</sup>

The hazarding of much to gain more is seen as an honourable and courageous action and a necessary risk. All three are seen as courageous, but not rash men: the popular idea of Jason and Drake as superhuman heroes transfers in part to the more human, and therefore more easily identified with, Bassanio.

If Bassanio is Jason, Portia must be, as well as the fleece itself, Medea. Medea fell in love with Jason and helped him to complete the impossible tasks her father had set him, and to win the golden fleece. If some critics are to be believed,<sup>103</sup> Portia helps Bassanio make his choice of

casket by subtle clues, but even if this is discounted (as I think it must be) she still rescues Bassanio's friend and father-figure<sup>104</sup> by her 'magical' transformation into a male lawyer. Medea rejuvenated Jason's father by her magic, (it is this part of the story Jessica refers to in V i 12-14). Whitney's emblem presents Medea as helpful but according to Greek legend she used her sorcerous powers for ill as well as for good and was responsible for the death of her brother, Absyrtus, cutting him up and throwing the pieces in the sea behind the boat in which she escaped with Jason in order to delay her father who stopped to retrieve the remains of his son.<sup>105</sup> Jessica herself resembles Medea in her elopement with Lorenzo, and in her prodigal 'scattering' of Shylock's money and jewels, which he regards as his children, if Solanio's report in II viii 15-22 of his reaction to the loss of his money and his daughter can be believed. Medea was later purified of the murder of her brother, but took a terrible revenge on Pelias, the murderer of her father, by persuading his daughters to cut him up and boil him in a cauldron in the mistaken belief that they could thus rejuvenate him. Later, she sent a poisoned garment to the young bride Jason had deserted her for.<sup>106</sup> Shakespeare avoids any mention of her evil tendencies in *The Merchant of Venice*, although he is clearly aware of them as his reference to the story in *2 Henry VI* shows:

Young Clifford:    Meet I an infant of the house of York,  
                          Into as many gobbets will I cut it  
                          As wild Medea young Absyrtus did.        (V ii 57-59)

and his placing her in the pattern of dialogue between Jessica and Lorenzo in their romantic exchange at the beginning of V i would indicate an awareness of her role as betrayer. Portia is, in fact, like Medea, a dangerous figure. In the trial she appears at first as a disinterested party, and her judgement of the validity of Shylock's claim is a serious threat to Antonio's life, but it is ultimately Shylock for whom she is the danger, and she traps him as Medea trapped Pelias. Like Medea, Portia is not always what she seems, but her deception is for an opposite motive.

Whitney's other references to the golden fleece come together in the emblem *In divitem, indoctum*:

On goulden fleece, did Phryxus passe the wave,  
 And landed safe, within the wished baie:  
 By which is ment, the fooles that riches have,  
 Supported are, and borne throughe Lande, and Sea:  
     And those enrich'de by wife, or servauntes goodds,  
     Are borne by them like Phryxus through the floodds.<sup>107</sup>

This is a fairly close translation of Alciati's emblem *Dives indoctus*<sup>108</sup> and is followed immediately, under the same illustration, by:

A Leaden sworde, within a goulden sheathe,  
 Is like a foole of natures finest mould:  
 To whome, shee did her rarest giftes bequethe.  
 Or like a sheepe, within a fleece of goulde.  
 Or like a clothe, whome colours brave adorne,  
 When as the ground, is patched, rent, and torne.

For, if the minde the chiefest treasures lacke,  
 Though nature bothe, and fortune, bee our frende;  
 Though goulde wee weare, and purple on our backe,  
 Yet are wee poore, and none will us comende  
 But onlie fooles; and flatterers, for their gaine:  
 For other men, will ride us with disdain.<sup>109</sup>

Although these emblems refer to foolishness, and Bassanio is not a fool, they have some bearing on the play. Bassanio, after all, is to restore his fortunes with Portia's money and his venturing for her has been made possible by a supply of money from his friend. The second version is reminiscent of the caskets - the leaden sword in a golden sheath matches the death's head in the golden casket, and by inverting the image, the golden fleece/girl in the lead casket. Shakespeare again uses a familiar image and twists it in order to give it more potency: Portia represents an inversion of the second stanza. She has gold, fortune and friends, but she also has intelligence and virtue, the treasures of the mind, and it is these that Bassanio finds her most attractive qualities (I i 161-163). In P.S.'s version of *Paradin* the simple emblem of the golden fleece is accompanied by the motto 'He reaped no small reward of his labors'<sup>110</sup> and is followed by a history of the order of the Golden Fleece, which was originated by Philip, Duke of Burgundy in 1429 when he chose twenty four noblemen to form a group dedicated to following Jason's example of virtue and godliness. Samuel Daniel's translation of *Paulus Iovius* also refers to the order; when asked to describe its founding Jovius replies:

This which you demaund is very intricate and of few knowne, yea hardly of many, which weare it about their necke: because thereunto is hanged the Fleece, interpreted of some the golden Fleece of *Iason* gotten by the *Argonautes*. And some referre it to the holy scripture, that it is the Fleece of *Gedeon* which signifieth unbroken faith.<sup>111</sup>

The story of Gideon and the fleece appears in Judges 6. 36-40, but Jovius seems to be the only emblematic writer to relate it to the Golden Fleece. However, if we take Portia to represent the fleece, she can also be said to represent faith by following Bassanio in the belief that she can save his friend. Shakespeare once more twists the image, highlighting it, by making Bassanio break his faith with Portia by giving away the ring he had vowed



to keep for ever. Portia, after teasing him into seeing his error, reestablishes his vow and the faith it symbolises, and proves her own unbroken faith in him by restoring the ring.

Shakespeare, by making Portia a golden fleece, underlines the point made by the emblematisers that such prizes must be earned: Bassanio has to *work* to win her. He risks much in taking the test, and only wins by using both mind and heart, proving himself a worthy winner.

### 3.b.iii Janus

Another classical reference appears in I i 50 when Solanio swears by 'two-headed Janus' which John Russell Brown notes as 'an appropriate god to swear by: one of his faces was smiling, the other frowning.'<sup>12</sup> Solanio's words

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. (I i 47-50)

are proverbial and the rest of this speech points the contrast between fools that laugh at sad events and those who will not smile even when it is condoned by the epitome of gravity, Nestor. As with the references to Jason, this superficially simple allusion has a more complex foundation which is not immediately recognisable until the related passages of emblem literature are studied. Janus had a more symbolic value than the simple role allotted to him by Brown, which neither that, nor any other critic has noticed. In fact Henry Green dismisses the image altogether:

He [Shakespeare] adopts the picture, but not one of the sentiments; these however, he did not need: it was only as a passing illustration that he named Janus, and how the author described the god's qualities was no part of his purpose.<sup>13</sup>

In view of Green's familiarity with Whitney's emblems, this statement is remarkable. Whitney's emblem *Respice, et prospice* begins the second part of his book:

The former parte, nowe paste, of this my booke,  
The seconde parte in order doth insue:  
Which, I beginne with IANUS double looke,  
That as hee sees, the yeares both oulde, and newe,  
So, with regarde, I may these partes behoulde,  
Perusinge ofte, the newe, and eeke the oulde.

And if, that faulte within us doe appeare,  
Within the yeare, that is already donne,  
As IANUS biddes us alter with the yeare,  
And make amendes, within the yeare begonne,  
Even so, my selfe survayghinge what is past;  
With greater heede may take in hande the laste.

This Image had his rites, and temple faire,  
 And call'd the GOD of warre, and peace, bicause  
 In warres, hee warn'de of peace not to dispaire:  
 And warn'de in peace, to practise martiall lawes:  
 And furthermore, his lookes did teache this somme;  
 To beare in minde, time past, and time to comme.<sup>114</sup>

Whitney has developed the meaning of the emblem as it is found in Alciati, where it appears simply as a symbol of prudence:

*Prudentes* (The Prudent)

Two-faced Janus, you who already know the past and the future,  
 and who see the mocking grimaces behind you as well as before you,  
 why do they portray you with so many eyes, why with so many faces?  
 Or is it because your form shows that man has been circumspect?<sup>115</sup>

The Italian version of Alciati expands this to

*The head gives that which belongs to it*  
 Janus has two faces from which he discerns and sees all things,  
 whether they are in the back or in front. This is the mark of the  
 prudent man, whom he requires to turn his mind to wherever he is  
 going or not going, be it the past that never returns, be it that  
 which he plans to do in the future. This is the real knowledge,  
 living without which, man lives without prudence.<sup>116</sup>

Thomas Combe's English translation of La Perriere shows Janus with his double face, holding a key and the sun and carries the motto 'According to the time forepast, Be wisely warned at the last' with the verse:

*Ianus* is figur'd with a double face,  
 To note at once the time to come and past,  
 So should the wise observe the passed space,  
 As they may well foresee a chance at last,  
 And with such providence direct this race,  
 That in their thoughts both times by ever plaste:  
 Embracing vertue then in every thing,  
 Themselves to rest and quiet peace shall bring.<sup>117</sup>

Green translates La Perrière's French stanza:

In old times the god Janus with two faces  
 Our ancients did delineate and portray,  
 To demonstrate that counsels of wise races  
 Look to a future, as well as the past day;  
 In fact all time of deeds should leave the traces,  
 And of the past recordance ever have;  
 The future should foresee like providence,  
 Following up virtue in each noble quality,  
 Seeking God's strength from sinfulness to save  
 Who thus shall do will learn by evidence  
 That he has power to live in great tranquility.<sup>118</sup>

With this in mind it is difficult to see how Green could have ignored the metaphysical relationship between Janus, as representing Prudence and the need to examine ones own faults, and the characters in the play who are wilfully blind to their errors. For Whitney in particular, Janus is not just a symbol of prudence, but an emblem of warning, a reminder that man

has a responsibility to rectify any faults that he may have committed, with the implication that unless he does so, they may rebound on him. This applies to both Antonio and Shylock. Antonio does not feel any compunction for his treatment of Shylock - he will spit upon him again - but his lack of compassion and understanding, or even of tolerance, is reflected in Shylock's determination to revenge. Whether one believes Shylock to be a wronged innocent or a vengeful villain, the fact remains that Antonio's attitude to the Jew has exacerbated the situation, if not actually brought it about. Certainly he is lacking in prudence to accept the proffered bond in the first place, even if he regards it as a joke on Shylock's behalf. He has to learn not only prudence, but compassion, and by the end of the play he has grown enough to show the mercy to Shylock which Shylock refused him. Shylock in his turn, shows lack of prudence in persisting with his suit. He fails to look ahead, or to consider the possibility that things may turn against him. The warning that Janus symbolises encourages preparation for anything, and a desire to put right what has been done in the past.

This emphasis on the importance of looking to both the past and the future is present in other characters: Jessica has the foresight to provide money for her elopement, and both she and Lorenzo carefully plan their escape; Bassanio risks his present circumstances for future gain of a bride, having already wasted his own fortune in the past; Launcelot considers the pros and cons of leaving his old master, the Jew, to seek service with a new master, Bassanio. Portia represents a figure who both respects the past, in her deference to the wishes of her dead father, and responds to the future, in her awareness of the need to detach Bassanio from his close friendship with Antonio. She comes to court prepared to fight, and when her warnings of the future consequences of Shylock's suit - that he will ultimately be judged by God for his actions - are ignored, she uses the established law of Venice, with its implications of ancient statutes, to defeat him. If, as I shall argue in the Chapter on Justice and Mercy below, Shylock and Portia represent respectively the Old Law and the New Law, the image of considering both past and future becomes an emblem for the whole play, and the life-threat to Antonio becomes a microcosmic image of the macrocosmic danger of a belief in righteousness through adherence to ancient rituals rather than belief in the doctrine of mercy and salvation through grace with its emphasis on the life after death. While

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*Per far denari.*

THE worldly wretch, that day and night doth toile,  
 And tire himselfe in bodie and in minde,  
 To gather that by all devises vile,  
 He must be faine ere long to leave behinde:  
 All shapes like *PROTEVS* gladly entertaines,  
 No matter what, so that they bring the gaines.

Abroade Religion, Flatterie at the Court,  
 Plaine dealing in the Countrie where he dwells,  
 Then Gravitie among the wiser sort,  
 Where Fooles are rife, his Follie most excels:  
 Thus every way transforme himselfe he can  
 Save one, in time to turne an honest man.

*Alia*

Shylock is seen with his eyes fixed firmly on the past, Portia sees to the future.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Janus' two-facedness is seen as a symbol of prudence, the two faces looking in opposite directions to see both 'time past, and time to come', but Shakespeare's only other reference to Janus is also in an oath, and is spoken by Iago in *Othello*:

Iago: Those are the raised father and his friends.  
 You were best go in.  
 Othello: Not I; I must be found.  
 My parts, my title, and my perfect soul  
 Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?  
 Iago: By Janus, I think so. (Othello I ii 29-33)

Iago uses Othello's inability to see the present accurately to work on his understanding of both past and future. Iago manipulates Othello's view of Desdemona's past and future by persuading the Moor that she has been unfaithful before, and will be so again. Here the use of the oath 'by Janus' relates not only to the need to see truthfully into past and future, and particularly, a need for prudence in Othello's actions, for it is his rashness in killing Desdemona without waiting to hear her version of events which destroys him; but the emblem also conjurs up the image of two-facedness in a different context, and one which is equally relevant to *The Merchant of Venice*, in which the faces do not view in opposite directions, but are, masklike, set one behind the other. In this instance the image of the two faces invokes the emblem of hypocrisy, where Iago, the arch-traitor, uses the oath to the man who believes implicitly in his honesty, but whom he is in fact conspiring against. Combe's emblem 6 carries the illustration of four masks and the text

*Most men do use some colour'd shift  
 For to conceal their craftie drift.*

Masks will be more hereafter in request,  
 And grow more deare than any they did heretofore:  
 They serv'd then onely but in play and iest,  
 For merriment, and to no purpose more:  
 Now be they usde in earnest of the best,  
 And of such Maskers there abound such store,  
 That you shall finde but few in any place,  
 That carrie not sometimes a double face.<sup>119</sup>

and Peacham also uses masks in his woodcut for *Per far denari*  
 [Illustration 3]

The worldly wretch, that day and night doth toile,  
 And tire himselfe in bodie and in minde,  
 To gather that by all devises vile,  
 He must be faine ere long to leave behinde:  
 All shapes like PROTEUS gladly entertaines,  
 No matter what, so that they bring the gaines ...

... Thus every way transforme himselfe he can  
Save one, in time to turne an honest man.<sup>120</sup>

Shakespeare emphasises the mask of hypocrisy that Iago assumes by having him continually referred to as the one thing he is not, and never can be; an honest man.

### 3.c. Hypocrisy: false friendship

The idea of a villainous mind behind a smiling face is proverbial and appears frequently in Shakespeare, perhaps most memorably in *Hamlet*:

O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!  
My tables - meet it is I set it down  
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain. (I v 106-108)

It appears in *The Merchant of Venice* when Antonio says

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.  
An evil soul producing holy witness  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,  
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.  
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath! (I iii 93-97)

and in Bassanio's words:

I like not fair terms and a villain's mind. (I iii 174)

Reason, in Petrarch's *Physicke*, warns of the dangers of seeming friends:

As for friendes, there be alwayes fewe, or none at all, and many  
tymes (whiche is most iniurious) a householde enimie possesseth the  
name of a friende, and under colour of feigned good wyl, there  
lurketh domestical treason.<sup>121</sup>

Shylock puts on the mantle of friendship, although from his aside in I iii 36-47 the audience knows that he hates the Christians and particularly Antonio. We see his two-facedness as he turns from smiling amity towards Antonio to snarling hate in his asides to the audience. The two faces are clearly visible to the audience, and are set in direct juxtaposition. Shylock declares that he 'would be friends' (I iii 133) with Antonio, and although Bassanio is doubtful, Antonio accepts the terms of the bond. Whitney warns of the dangers of false friendship in six emblems,<sup>122</sup> none of which have exact parallels in Alciati, and also warns to beware of taking gifts from an enemy.<sup>123</sup> The emblem *Latet anguis in herba* expresses the warning against a show of friendship:

Of flattringe speeche, with sugred wordes beware,  
Suspect the harte, whose face doth fawne, and smile,  
With trusting theise, the worlde is clog'de with care,  
And fewe there bee can scape theise vipers vile:  
With pleasinge speeche they promise, and protest,  
With hatefull hartes lie hidd within their brest.

The faithfull wight, dothe neede no collours brave,  
But those that truste, in time his truthe shall trie,

Where fawning mates, can not their credit save,  
 Without a cloake, to flatter, faine, and lye:  
 No foe so fell, nor yet soe harde to scape,  
 As is the foe, that fawnes with freindlie shape.<sup>124</sup>

Shylock conforms to the outline Whitney gives. It is ironical that he refers to Antonio as like 'a fawning publican'. He fences verbally with Antonio, but convinces him that he is honest in the matter of the bond, and that all he desires is Antonio's friendship:

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. (I iii 162-165)

Antonio has enough knowledge of Shylock to be wary of trusting him, yet he accepts the bond, thinking that he will have the money by the time repayment is due. The emblems emphasise that seeming friends are more dangerous and insidious than overt enemies:

*Amicitia fucata vitanda*  
 Of open foes, wee alwaies maie beware,  
 And arme our selves, their Malice to withstande:  
 Yea, though they smile; yet have wee still a care,  
 Wee trust them not, although they give their hande:  
 Their Foxes coate, their fained harte bewraies,  
 Wee neede not doubt, because wee knowe their waies.

But those, of whome wee must in daunger bee,  
 Are deadlie foes, that doe in secret lurke,  
 Whoe lie in waite, when that wee can not see,  
 And unawares, doe our destruction worke:  
 No foe so fell, (as BIAS wise declares)  
 As man to man, when mischeife hee prepares.<sup>125</sup>

### 3.d. The dog and hypocrisy

The Emblematisers' references to fawning, flattery and sugared words relate indirectly to a not-infrequent Shakespearean topos. He associates dogs who lick the sticky sweetness from men's fingers with flatterers, hypocrites and traitors, as several references make clear.<sup>126</sup> Shylock is associated with the dog by numerous references, although it is curious that more than half are made by Shylock himself. In I iii he accuses Antonio of calling him 'cut-throat dog' (I.106), 'stranger cur' (I.113), 'dog' (I.116), 'cur' (I.117), 'dog' (I.123) and twice in III iii 'dog' (II. 6, 7). In fact his accusations of Antonio are never substantiated: we never see Antonio or Bassanio refer to Shylock in these specific terms, although their friends do: Solanio refers to him as a 'dog' (II viii 14) and an 'impenetrable cur' (III iii 18) and Gratiano calls him 'inexcrable dog' (IV i 128). To insult a man by calling him 'dog' or 'cur' is common enough,

Aula.

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WITH mightie men, who likes to spend his prime,  
 And loues that life, which few account the best,  
 In hope at length vnto his heighth to clime,  
 By good desert, or thorough Fortune blest,  
 May here behold the Modell of his blisse,  
 And what his life, in summe and substance is.

A Ladie faire, is FAVOUR feign'd to be,  
 Whose youthfull Cheeke, doth beare a louely blush,  
 And as no niggard of her courtesie,  
 She beares about a Holy-water brush:  
 Where with her bountie round about she throwes,  
 Faire promises, \* good wordes, and gallant shoves.

*Caesare Ripa's Iconologia.*

\* Bylina verba.  
*Plutarch. in Apophthegm.*



Ff1.

Herewith



but with the knowledge that Shakespeare frequently sees dogs as treacherous and hypocritical the depth of the insult is increased. In *Richard III* the fawning dog is seen as dangerous, as Queen Margaret warns Buckingham to beware of the arch hypocrite, Richard :

O Buckingham, take heed of yonder dog!  
 Look when he fawns, he bites; and when he bites,  
 His venom tooth will rankle to the death. (I iii 289-291)

Shylock himself warns of this:

Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause,  
 But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs. (III iii 6-7)

The speech is closely related to one by Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*:

We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please,  
 And when we grin we bite.<sup>127</sup> (II iii 20-21)

Peacham makes use of the dog as representative of fawning in his emblem on Favour, which shows a female figure holding a 'Holy-water brush' and a knot of hooks, standing beside a set stocks and a spaniel [Illustration 4]. The verse explains that Favour is attractive, and the brush represents her fair promises, the hooks and stocks her bondage, and the spaniel her flattery:

With mightie men, who likes to spend his prime,  
 And loves that life, which few account the best,  
 In hope at length unto his heighth to clime,  
 By good desert, or thorough Fortune blest,  
 May here behold the Modell of his blisse,  
 And what his life, in summe and substance is.

A Ladie faire, is FAVOUR feign'd to be,  
 Whose youthfull Cheeke, doth beare a lovely blush,  
 And as no niggard of her courtesie,  
 She beares about a Holy-water brush:  
 Where with her bountie round about she throwes,  
 Faire promises, good wordes, and gallant shoves.<sup>128</sup>

The association between dogs and fawning became so common that Whitney had no need to specify the animal when referring to false friends in his emblems quoted on p.55 above. He does, however, mention the dog specifically in expounding the proverbial dog-in-the-manger story, where the dog symbolises greediness and envy:

A snarlinge curre, did in the manger lie,  
 Who rather sterv'd then made the haye, his meate,  
 Yet shew'd his fanges, and offred for to flie  
 Uppon the oxe, who hungred for to eate.  
 And there throughe spite, did keepe the oxe from foode;  
 Untill for wante, hee faynted as hee stoode.

The covetous man envious, here behoulde,  
 Who hath inowghe, yet use thereof doth lacke;

And doth envie his needie neighbour, shoulde  
 But get a groate, if he coulde houlde it backe?  
 Who, thoughe they doe possesse the divill, and all?  
 Yet are they like the dogge, in oxes stall.<sup>129</sup>

Curs, fangs, spite, envy, the devil and the dog are all applied in various ways to Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, and his insistence on his bond, although he has no direct use for Antonio's flesh relate him closely to Whitney's view of the covetous man.

One of Shakespeare's common uses of dog imagery cannot be traced to any specific emblem literature, although it has a distinctly emblematic feel to it; it is his association of the dog with chaos and dissension:

Now for the bare-pick'd bone of majesty  
 Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest  
 And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace;  
 Now powers from home and discontents at home  
 Meet in one line; and vast confusion waits,  
 As doth a raven on a sick-fall'n beast,  
 The imminent decay of wrested pomp. (King John IV iii 148-154)  
 Cry 'havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war. (Julius Caesar III i 274)  
 Two curs shall tame each other: pride alone  
 Must tarre the mastiffs on, as 'twere their bone.  
 (Troilus and Cressida I iii 391-392)

The quote from *Troilus and Cressida* is particularly apposite as it comes at the end of the scene in which Ulysses has made a long speech in favour of degree, which he sees as a way of establishing order and in which he details the consequences of disorder and breakdown in the hierarchy of natural laws. Shylock's turning upon the Christian Venetians would have been considered as a kind of rebellion against the order of Western Christendom in which Christians were regarded as superior to Jews. In addition, Shylock threatens that unless his bond is upheld the laws of Venice have become worthless:

If you deny me, fie upon your law!  
 There is no force in the decrees of Venice. (IV i 101-102)

and Antonio himself recognises the danger to authority:

The Duke cannot deny the course of law;  
 For the commodity that strangers have  
 With us in Venice, if it be denied,  
 Will much impeach the justice of the state,  
 Since that the trade and profit of the city  
 Consisteth of all nations. (III iii 26-31)

and Portia replies to Bassanio's plea to bend the rules in the trial scene:

It must not be; there is no power in Venice  
 Can alter a decree established;  
 'Twill be recorded for a precedent,

And many an error, by the same example,  
Will rush into the state; it cannot be.

(IV i 213-217)

To waive the laws which give Shylock the right to his bond would menace the equilibrium of law and State in Venice, and result in chaos. A late emblem book *The Royal Politician*, translated by Sir James Astry from a Spanish emblem book by Diego de Saavedra Fajardo,<sup>130</sup> sets forward an emblematic system of education for a Prince, and includes the following passage in Emblem XXII *A Prince will best Establish himself by Justice and Clemency*

Let not a Prince suffer any one to think himself so great, and free from the Laws, as to dare to oppose the Ministers of Justice, and those who represent its Power and Authority, for so the Pillar of Justice can't stand secure, when such boldness once takes place, contempt will by degrees undermine it, and bring it to the Ground.<sup>131</sup>

Both Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Duke in *Comedy of Errors* bear out the belief that infringement of laws is impossible if order is to be maintained, although for dramatic reasons, Shakespeare allows both to eventually put aside the laws which had been presented at the beginning of the play as so strict. In *The Merchant of Venice* the drama stems from the fact that Shakespeare does *not* allow the law to be waived. The situation is handled with more realism and the solution is more subtle: the law is circumvented not by the *deus ex machina* of the ruler, but by the law itself, and the balance of the State is kept by adherence to its rules. The disorder that Ulysses envisages as a consequence of the greed for power or wealth is avoided, and the Christians do not extract the ultimate payment from Shylock as they are entitled to do. They exhibit, not his desire for revenge, which has ultimately destroyed him, but a measure of mercy.

### 3.e. The wolf

One of the key emblems in *The Merchant of Venice* is the image of Shylock as, not a dog, but a wolf. The most overt reference is in the trial scene when Gratiano's speech brings together the images of dog and wolf:

Thy currish spirit  
Govern'd a wolf who, hang'd for human slaughter,  
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,  
And, whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,  
Infus'd itself in thee: for thy desires  
Are wolfish, bloody, starv'd and ravenous.

(IV i 133-138)

It has been argued that the above passage is a direct reference to the

Lopez affair, which will be discussed fully in Chapter 5, section 2.a., but in fact the image of the wolf encompasses a whole cluster of images, all of which are particularly applicable to Shylock.

### 3.e.i. The wolf in sheep's clothing

Barclay warns of false appearances in *Of falshode, gile and disceate, and suche as folowe them*:

Some shine without, and as swete bawme they smell  
But yet their heartes are filled with falsenes,  
And within the skin more ill then man can tell,  
As gile and disceate iust therwith to oppresse,  
And wolves ravishing full of unthriftinesse  
Bere shepes skinnnes, showing not that they be  
Foxes within, shewing out simplicitie.<sup>132</sup>

and in a later section expands the idea into an attack on hypocrisy, stanzas 5 and 18 of which run:

The wolfe or foxe is hid within the skin,  
Of the simple sheepe poore and innocent,  
Mekenes without, but pride is hid within,  
The wordes faire, but false is their intent,  
No sort by falshood or wayes fraudulent,  
May sooner disceyve, good folke by any way,  
Then the wicked sort of ypocrites may ...  
  
... As foxes full of falshood and of gile,  
By subtiltie they all their workes gide,  
They boldly other for statelynes revile,  
Yet as proude Lions are they accloyed with pride,  
And while that they in company abide,  
They shewe them outwarde as Lambes innocent,  
Like ravishing wolves yet are they of intent.<sup>133</sup>

The idea of the wolf in sheep's clothing is proverbial and is an image which Shakespeare uses frequently,<sup>134</sup> and in *The Merchant of Venice* it applies to Shylock's attempts to trap Antonio. It appears mainly in emblematic literature as a metaphor for hypocrisy. Barclay, in *The Mirrour of Good Maners* uses the image

But amonge all people no man is more damnable,  
Then he which resembleth a sheepe forth in the skin  
But by cruell purpose, and maners disceyvable,  
He is in very deede a raging wolfe within.<sup>135</sup>

The English translation of Ripa<sup>136</sup> provides a verbal description as well as a woodcut of Hypocrisy [Illustration 5] who is shown as a woman giving alms to a cripple while reading a mass book, but with the legs and feet of a wolf to show 'that outwardly she is a Lamb, but inwardly, a ravening Wolf'. Whitney's *Frontis nulla fides* refers to 'ravening wolves, in skinnnes of lambes' in his emblem warning against enemies disguised as friends.<sup>137</sup>



5, Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
 'Hypocrisy', no.150, p.38



6, Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
 'Avarice', no.31, p.8

In the line immediately before he says 'And Hypocrites, have Godlie wordes at will': Shylock has already demonstrated this in his quoting of scripture, as Antonio has commented in I iii 93-97:

Mark you this, Bassanio,  
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.  
An evil soul producing holy witness  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,  
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.  
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

### 3.e.ii. Avarice

While Shylock presents a suspiciously amicable façade to Antonio and Bassanio, he also exhibits another vice with which the wolf was associated - that of avarice - and there can be no doubt that, whatever Shylock's motives are, they are at least partially, and I would argue largely, rooted in envy of the financial success of the respected and accepted figure of the merchant. Emblems which present a link between avarice and the wolf are numerous. Ripa personifies Avarice [Illustration 6] as

An old Woman, pale-fac'd, lean and melancholy, her Pain makes her lay one Hand upon her Belly, yet seems to devour a Purse, with her Eyes, which she grasps in the other, accompanied only with a hunger-starv'd Wolf.

Her Paleness proceeds from her Envy, that torments her, to see her Neighbour richer than herself. Her Eyes are fix'd on her Purse, it being her chief Delight. The Wolf denotes the voracious Humour of the covetous, who would have other mens Goods by hook or by crook.<sup>138</sup>

The association of the wolf with avarice encompassed a special relationship between the wolf and the miserly usurer, who was pictured as having specifically lupine traits. In Thomas Wilson's *A Discourse uppon Usurye* he relates that 'before the conquest', wolves had been killed for money per head, and had as a result been wiped out in England. He goes on to recommend that usurers should likewise be exterminated:

I doe thinke you shoulde doe a greater good deede to thys lande, then ever was doone by kyllinge of wolfes. For these bee the greedie cormoraunte wolfes in deede, that ravyn up both beaste and man, who, whyles they walke in sheepe skynnes, doe covertlye devowre the flocke of England, under coloure of their wealth and counterfeited honesty.<sup>139</sup>

As Shylock is undoubtedly a usurer and hypocrite, and also appears to be something of a miser, the link is already present by the time Gratiano makes a specific reference to Shylock as a wolf in the trial scene in lines 133-138 already quoted above on page 60.

## 3.e.iii. Usury: greed and cannibalism

The wolf is also an accepted symbol for usurers.<sup>140</sup> Brant cites as one of the company of his Ship of Fools the man who borrows too much:

A prominent, outstanding fool  
 Who must make borrowing a rule  
 And credits not the man who quotes:  
*"Wolves eat no promissory notes,"*  
 Thus also he whose wrongs and sin  
 God overlooks, to chasten him,  
 While daily he commits more ill  
 And God in heaven waits until  
 The final hour will come around  
*When he will pay the final pound ...*  
 ... The man who's careful when he borrows  
 Has but few cares and fewer sorrows;  
*Trust not the men, they are not true,*  
*Who'd sign your bond and lend to you;*  
*If you can't pay you will be bled,*  
 They'll take the cover off your bed.<sup>141</sup> (my italics)

Barclay's translation of Brant phrases it rather differently, seeing the borrower as the wolf:

A man that is busy both even and morowe,  
 With ravishing clawes and insaciable,  
 Of his frendes and neighbours to begge and to borowe,  
 To the devouring wolfe is most like or semblable ...  
 ... He that ought boroweth which he can not pay,  
 Of a wolfe ravishing foloweth the trayne,  
 But though he all swalowe yet can he by no way,  
 Devoure the time nor the prefixed day:  
 Wherefore if he then disceive his creditour,  
 He oft him chasteth with iustice and rigour.<sup>142</sup>

The idea that, however much the wolf eats, he cannot satisfy his appetite applies both to lender and borrower, and such insatiable hunger is used by Shakespeare to denote greed for power or wealth.

In *The Mirrour of Maiestie*, the wolf is a symbol of greed:

The Wolfe and Lyon once together met,  
 And by agreement they their purpose set  
 To hunt together: when they had obtainde  
 Their bootie long persude, the Wolfe refrainde  
 No more than formerly, from greedinesse;  
 The Lyon apprehending, that much lesse  
 Might satisfie a beast no bigger growne,  
 Thought all the purchase rather was his owne:  
 And thought suppression of a beast so base  
 Was iustice, to preserve the common race  
 Of harmlesse beasts, then speedily he teares  
 The Wolfe, to take away their usuall feares.<sup>143</sup>

The verse goes on to liken the wolf to Rome and the lion to the monarch, preserving the country from the greed of the Catholic church. The

attitude of the poet shows that he sees the destruction of the greedy wolf as simple and righteous justice. Greed, avarice, envy, usury and miserliness are all represented in the image of the wolf, and express themselves in terms of hunger. 'Ravening' is the most common adjective to accompany 'wolf' in emblem literature, and is also frequent in Shakespeare.<sup>144</sup> In emblem usage the word expands to include usurers, so that even when the animal is not directly invoked, the image springs to mind. Barclay demands that, with regard to 'Usurers and Okerers'

The power of the lawe ought sharply to chastice  
 With extreme rigour and mortall punishment  
 This sorte infective that foloweth this vice,  
 This ravening sort worthy paynes violent,  
 Agaynst our Lordes devine commaundement.<sup>145</sup>

Thus usury, envy and avarice came to be associated with a cannibalistic element. When Bassanio invites Shylock to dine (I iii 28) he introduces the image of feeding which Shylock follows up with his words 'Your worship was the last man in our mouths' (I iii 55). In Barclay's *Of them that wilfully offende, not taking heede to the ende, and hurteth every man, not thinking to have their malice rendred agayne*, the image of eating with an enemy becomes symbolic:

Be not a gest thou man who ever thou art,  
 To suche as loving outwarde thou seest appere,  
 Maliciously within, and of envious hart,  
 He biddeth thee eate and drinke, and make good chere,  
 With love, as farre as thou canst see or here:  
 But when such traytours moste swetely on thee smile,  
 Then are they busiest thee falsly to begile ...  
 Yea, oft he laugheth as he were true and good,  
 Graunting thy wordes what ever thing thou say,  
 Which in his minde would fayne see thy heart bloud.<sup>146</sup>

Or as Zeydel's modern translation of Brant puts the last lines

Some men will smile a friendly smile  
*But eat your heart out all the while.*<sup>147</sup>

This brings together the ideas of envy, hypocrisy and cannibalism, and reflects directly on Shylock's intentions towards Antonio. Shylock desires Antonio's heart and his plot is motivated by a desire for money (as well as possible revenge). As Shylock reveals:

I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of  
 Venice, I can make what merchandise I will. (III i 116-118)

and the link between covetousness, revenge and cannibalism can be seen in his remark to Salerio earlier in the same scene, when the latter asks him what good Antonio's flesh is to him:

To bait fish withal. If it will *feed* nothing else, it will *feed* my  
 revenge. (III i 45-46) (my italics)



His role as 'ravening wolf' is substantiated by his language, and in II v he tells Jessica that he goes to supper with Bassanio

in hate, to *feed upon*  
The prodigal Christian.

(II v 14-15) (my italics)

Ulysses's speech on degree in *Troilus and Cressida* has already been mentioned in connection with the dog, but he also makes the statement that

... appetite, an universal wolf ...  
Must make perforce an universal prey,  
And last eat up himself. (*Troilus and Cressida* I iii 121, 123-124)

Here Ulysses is using the image to depict total disorder. He does not, in fact, specify which appetite he means, but the image was used in connection with several vices, particularly pride, avarice and envy, all of which Shylock is guilty of, and 'deadly sins' were seen as self-consuming and obsessional. Shylock's pride in his cleverness, envy of Antonio's status and wealth and greed for money which he sees as being blocked by Antonio's free lending will eventually lead to his humiliating defeat, and his desire to 'feed upon' Antonio will turn upon itself.

### 3.f. Revenge: a self-destructive emotion

Shylock's insistence on the fulfilment of the bond stems from his belief in his own righteousness, but Barclay's *Of them that wilfully offende*, quoted in part above, emphasises that the risks of wilfully following a path of revenge are as dangerous to the evildoer as to the victim, and it is Shylock's blindness to this kind of justice which ultimately destroys him:

Here touche I fooles and men without counsell,  
Which putteth many unto busines and payne,  
And them sore greveth by their dedes cruell,  
Not thinking to be served with the same agayne ...

Consider man oft time within thy minde,  
The wrong that thou wouldest do to thy neighbour,  
Whether thou might in thy heart paciently finde,  
The same to suffer of him without rancour,  
Malice or ill will, wrath or displeasure:  
For thou oughtest not to do unto any creature  
That thing which thou of him would not endure.

He that will other men thrust by violence,  
Into a sacke by extortion and wronge,  
Must in like maner arme him with pacience,  
And suffer some blowes nowe and then amonge,  
To one ill turne another doth belonge: ...

O unwise foole whom madnes doth abuse,  
Howe darest thou by so hardy for to do  
That to another, which thy selfe would refuse  
Of him to be done to thee, yet some do so,  
Making a pit for others hurt and wo,

*Inuidiae descriptio.*

Ad Ra. W.



Inuidiam Ouid.  
describit 2. Me-  
tamorph.

**V** H A T hideous hagge with visage sterne appeares?  
Whose feeble limmes, can scarce the bodie staie:  
This, Enuie is: leane, pale, and full of yeares,  
Who with the blisse of other pines awaie.  
And what declares, her eating vipers broode?  
That poysoned thoughtes, bee euermore her foode.

Lucret. 5.  
Macerat Inuidia ante  
oculos illi esse potestem,  
Illum ad spectari, clare  
qui incedat honore:  
Ipse se in tenebris voluit,  
caroque queruntur.

What meanes her eies? so bleared, sore, and redd:  
Her mourninge still, to see an others gaine.  
And what is mente by snakes vpon her head?  
The fruite that springes, of such a venomd braine.  
But while, her harte shee rentes within her brest?  
It shewes her selfe, doth worke her owne vnrest.  
Whie looks shee wronge? bicause shee woulde not see,  
An happie wight, which is to her a hell:  
What other partes within this furie bee?  
Her harte, with gall: her tonge, with stinges doth swell.  
And laste of all, her staffe with prickes aboundes:  
Which showes her wordes, wherewith the good shee woundes.

Ouid. lib. 1. De  
Arte Amandi.

*Fertilior seges est alienis semper in agris,  
Vicinusq; pecus grandis vber habet.*

De In-

Wherein himselfe is destroyed at the last,  
And some in their owne snares are taken fast ...

But when these caytifs hath hurt a mans name,  
Or done him in body or goodes preiudice,  
They thinke he ought not to render them the same,  
Though it may be done by lawe and by iustice.<sup>148</sup>

The hunger of envy and greed is seen not only as ruinous for the victims, but as ultimately self-destructive. Images of personifications tearing at their own hearts, or even eating them, are common. Whitney describes Envy as an old hag, with snakes for hair and who 'her harte shee rentes within her brest'.<sup>149</sup> [Illustration 7] Alciati has the same image:

A dirty woman chewing on viper's flesh  
whose eyes are painful, and who is eating her own heart  
and who is thin and pale, and who carries a thorny staff  
in her hand: that is the way Envy is painted.<sup>150</sup>

### 3.g. Taking gifts from enemies

Shylock's plot nearly succeeds, because Antonio accepts his offered 'gift' at face value. His 'merry bond' may not at first sight have much chance of succeeding (Antonio fully expects to be able to pay him) but he is prepared to be patient in order to ruin his enemy. Antonio should suspect some underlying plot from the fact that the usually grasping usurer forgoes his interest. This is Antonio's normal practice, but he must be aware that it is not the Jew's. The emblematisers urge the dangers of accepting gifts from dubious sources: Whitney's emblem *Inimicorum dona*, *infausta* deals with the gifts of enemies:

If of thy foe, thou doest a gifte receive,  
Esteeme it not, for feare the fates doe lower,  
And with the gifte, ofte tyme thie life doe reave,  
Yea giftes wee reade, have suche a secret power,  
That oftentimes, they LYNCEUS eyes doe blinde,  
And he that gives, the taker faste doth binde ...  
... Of mortall foes, then see noe gifte thou take,  
Althoughe a while, a truce with them thou make.<sup>151</sup>

Shylock's 'gift' of the money interest-free will 'binde' Antonio and eventually threaten his life. Alciati uses a classical illustration to put across the same idea in *In dona hostium*:

They say that shield-bearing Ajax and Trojan Hector exchanged  
mementoes of the wars.  
Each accepted the instrument of his own death:  
the son of Priam the sword belt, the son of Telamon, the unbending  
sword.  
For the sword killed Ajax; while the belt, attached to Achilles'  
chariot, dragged Hector to death.

Thus the gifts that enemies send to enemies under the pretext of  
courtesy bear the prescient fate of the future.<sup>152</sup>

Shylock has revealed himself as bitter at Antonio's treatment of him in I iii 101-124 ending 'and for these courtesies/ I'll lend you thus much moneys?'. Shylock returns Antonio's 'courtesies' by proposing a 'kindness' - a bond which demands such a ridiculous forfeit that Antonio cannot take it seriously, and treats it in terms of an outlandish bet on a certainty. In his complacency he makes a serious mistake, because it is clear that Shylock is prepared to insist on the bond, should Antonio's argosies fail. Antonio, however, is confident that they will succeed, and accepts Shylock's offer as a friendly gesture. This is his second mistake, as it is made obvious that Shylock is no friend to Antonio, and will be prepared to do anything he can to ruin him. Whitney warns in *Frontes nulla fides* of trusting a friend who is doubtful in his loyalty 'No harte, nor hand, see that you ioyne with suche'.<sup>153</sup> The repeated use of the word heart in the emblems concerning false friendship and betrayal resound in the play in which Shylock assumes the role of false friend, intent on his enemies destruction by desiring a pound of Antonio's flesh 'Nearest his heart' according to the bond (IV i 249). To demand the heart itself would be an overt act of murder; Shylock is careful when first proposing the bond, not to be too specific; he asks for

an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
*In what part of your body pleaseth me.* (I iii 144-146) (my italics)

At this stage he is careful not to mention the heart, and it may be that the full possibilities of the situation have not yet occurred to him. By Act III his idea has hardened into specific mention of Antonio's heart, and by this time, too, the bond seems closer to being forfeited, as Tubal has just brought news of the failure of Antonio's ventures.<sup>154</sup> While Shylock has not stipulated the heart itself in the bond, he gets as close to it as he can without overtly committing murder, by demanding

A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off  
*Nearest the merchant's heart* (IV i 227-228) (my italics)

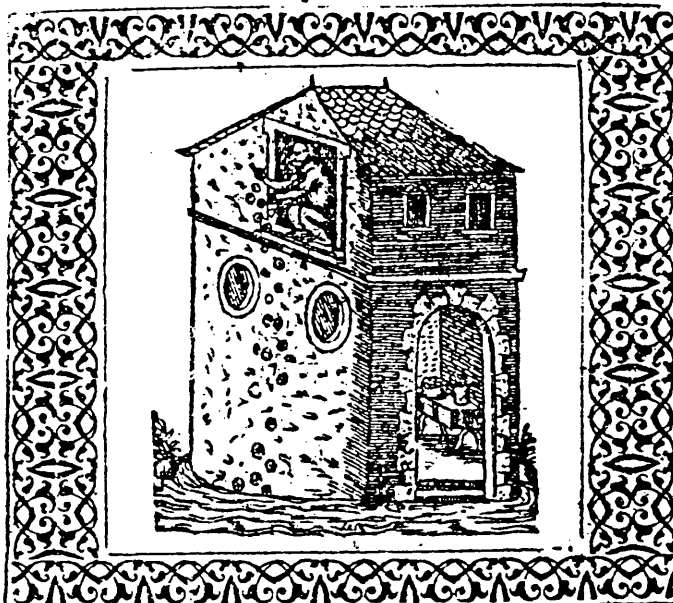
and his true desire is seen in continuing to insist on the forfeit of flesh when the original debt is offered back in monetary terms, and even when the repayment is offered at three times the principal, Shylock refuses.

### 3.h. The miser

Shylock's links with the emblematic view of the miser/usurer appear in yet another context. In II v Shylock commands Jessica to shut up his house

*Malè paria malè dilabuntur.*  
*In fœneratores.*

169



**A**N vserer, whose Idol was his goulde,  
 Within his house, a peeuishe ape retain'd:  
 A seruauant fitte, for suche a miser oulde,  
 Of whome both mockes, and apish mowes, he gain'd.  
 Thus, euerie daie he made his master sporte,  
 And to his clogge, was chained in the courte.  
 At lengthe it hap'd: while greedie graundfir din'de:  
 The ape got loose, and founde a window ope:  
 Where in he leap'de, and all about did finde,  
 The GOD, wherein the Miser put his hope?  
 Which soone he broch'd, and forthe with speede did fling,  
 And did delight on stones to heare it ringe?  
 The sighte, righte well the passers by did please,  
 Who did reioyce to finde these goalden crommes:  
 That all their life, their pouertie did ease.  
 Of goodes ill got, loe heere the fruite that comes.  
 Looke herevppon, you that haue M I D A S minne,  
 And bee possesse with hartes as harde as flinte.  
 Shut windowes close, lest apes doe enter in,  
 And doe disperse your goulde, you doe adore.  
 But woulde you learne to keepe, that you do winne?  
 Then get it well, and houre it not in store.  
 If not: no boulties, nor brasen barres will serue,  
 For GOD will waste your stocke, and make your sterue.

Y.

Y.

*Si necessarii con-*  
*temi essemus, mini-*  
*mè usurariorum ge-*  
*nus pessimum inue-*  
*niretur Plutarch. de*  
*vsur. vi.*

*Avaritia omnia in*  
*se vitia habet. Aut.*  
*Gell. lib. 11 cap. 1.*  
*Et idem lib. 3. cap. 1.*

with herself and his money inside. This does not stop her escaping with his gold, and reflects Whitney's Emblem *Malè parta malè dilabuntur*

An userer, whose Idol was his goulde,  
 Within his house, a peevishe ape retain'd:  
 A servaunt fitte, for suche a miser oulde,  
 Of whome both mockes, and apishe mowes, he gain'd.  
 Thus, everie daie he made his master sporte,  
 And to his clogge, was chained in the courte.  
 At lengthe it hap'd. While greedie graundsir din'de,  
 The ape got loose, and founde a windowe ope:  
 Where in he leap'de, and all about did finde,  
 The GOD, wherein the Miser put his hope,  
 Which soone he broch'd, and forthe with speede did flinge,  
 And did delighte on stones to heare it ringe ...  
 Of goodes ill got, loe heere the fruicte that commes,  
 Looke hereuppon, you that have MIDAS minte,  
 And bee possesse with hartes as harde as flinte,  
 Shut windowes close, lest apes doe enter in,  
 And doe disperse your goulde, you doe adore.  
 But woulde you learne to keepe, that you do winne,  
 Then get it well, and hourde it not in store,  
 If not: no boutes, nor brasen barres will serve,  
 For GOD will waste your stocke, and make you sterve.<sup>155</sup>

The emblem, with an identical woodcut [Illustration 8] appears in much the same form in P.S.'s translation of Paradin.<sup>156</sup> Shakespeare's references to apes are usually in connection with foolishness or with imitation. He does refer to one fable concerning an ape in *Hamlet* III iv 194-5, but, as Harold Jenkins points out in his note in the Arden edition 'its fame has not survived'<sup>157</sup> although it is clear that it is foolishness that is being pilloried. Jessica is locked in the house like the ape, and like him she is little more than a servant, or a possession. She elopes while her father is out to supper, escaping from the house. There is no narrative reason why Jessica should appear above, nor why she should not bring the casket of gold and jewels with her when she leaves the house (presumably by the door) but instead *throw it down* to Lorenzo as he waits below the window. The dramatic use of the upper level, heightening the sense of secret haste is deepened by the creation of a deliberate stage picture reproducing the woodcut illustration of Whitney's emblem in the positioning of Jessica at the higher level of the window from which she can toss her father's gold which, like the ape, she is about to scatter; as Tubal tells Shylock:

Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, one night, fourscore ducats ... One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey. (III i 93-94, 102-103)

The use of 'monkey' ties in with the image of the ape.<sup>158</sup> Jessica and Lorenzo's prodigality with Shylock's money is contrasted with his obsessive

interest in making barren metal breed. The gold does no good hoarded in his house; the young lovers, by spreading it around put it to good use. Their physical attachment to each other and the fertility implied by the pairing of youthful members of opposite sexes is contrasted with the sterility of Shylock's concerns. Avarice is a popular target for attack in emblem books, plays, pageants and paintings: it is often condemned for its selfishness, and hence, barrenness, and one of the themes of *The Merchant of Venice* is the willingness of love to give freely, not only of affection but of gold.

### 3.j. Women as property

Shylock's demands that Jessica lock up the house and stay inside reflect the standard recommendation to Elizabethan husbands to secure their wives by physical means. Barclay warns that incarcerating women is useless if they wish to escape:

For locke her fast, and all her lookes marke,  
 Note all her steppes, and twinkling of her eye,  
 Ordeyne thy watchers, and dagges for to barke,  
 Bar fast thy dores, and yet it will not be:  
 Close her in a Toure with walles stronge and hye,  
 But yet thou foole thou locest thy travayle,  
 For without she will, no man can kepe her tayle.<sup>159</sup>

and in Zeydel's translation of Brant's *Of Guarding Wives* the woman is identified with the house itself:

For e'en a padlock placed before  
 The entrance, be it gate or door,  
 And many guards about the house  
 Can't keep her honest toward her spouse.<sup>160</sup>

This, of course refers to marital infidelity, but the usual context for this kind of treatment was where an old man had married a young woman, and could not keep her sexually satisfied, so that she was forced to look elsewhere. This is not to suggest there is an incestuous relationship between Shylock and Jessica, but he fails to satisfy her need for a lover/husband by failing to arrange a marriage for her, and by demanding that she stays indoors. Like the women in Brant's verse, however, she escapes both the house and Shylock. Shylock, rather than identifying Jessica with a building, identifies his house with a person:

But stop my house's ears - I mean my casements;  
 Let not the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter  
 My sober house.

(II v 33-35)

This foreshadows the confusion Shylock is reported to express later on between his daughter and his ducats: he regards both as his property, but in a reversal, his house becomes human, while his daughter becomes

inanimate gold. Shylock imposes human sensitivity to his house, but is incapable of seeing the human needs of his daughter. His affections which should be directed towards living beings are centred on inanimate objects, and his response towards Jessica is not as towards another human with her own thoughts and feeling, who has a right to his love, but as his property - *his* flesh and blood, *his* daughter - who upsets his whole philosophy by acting as a person in her own right. The turmoil this causes in his private world is akin to that of many of Shakespeare's paternal characters who find themselves in the role of father to a rebellious daughter. While the difficulties presented by the independent behaviour of daughters often only creates a headache for the father, as for Prospero, Page, Egeus and Baptista, in other cases it leads to tragedy, as for Capulet and Brabantio, and in the case of Lear, madness. Like Lear, Shylock's mental state becomes overthrown. Jessica, like Cordelia, acts in a manner which is totally unexpected to her self-centred, blind father, and her action displays a condemnation of his life-style which he refuses to face up to. For Shylock, love is possessive; there is no place in his heart for the natural, unselfish love of family. For the Elizabethans, a miser's love for his gold was often seen in terms of a paternal affection,<sup>161</sup> and Shylock exhibits this in his inability to distinguish between his ducats and his daughter.

### 3.k. The torch and the candle

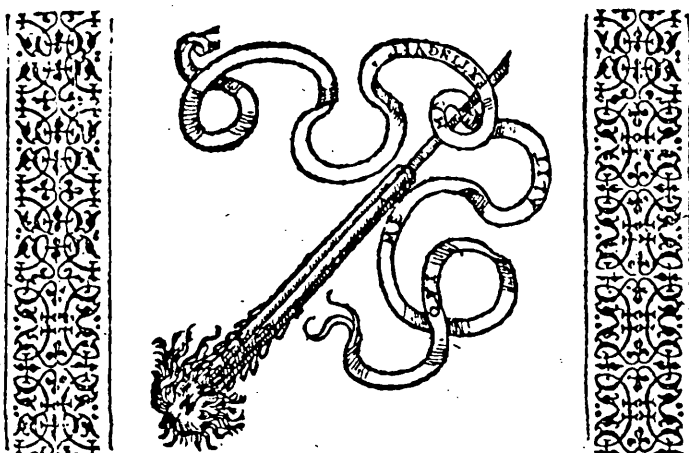
Jessica herself has a relationship to emblem literature in her torchbearing. Torches were used on a theatrical level as a way of identifying to an audience watching in full daylight that a scene was taking place at night. Torches usually identified an outdoor scene while tapers or candles signified an interior.<sup>162</sup> In Robert Farley's *Lychnocausia* each emblem is centred around the image of a light, usually a candle, but emblem 50 *If thou abroad, I at home* is illustrated by a man holding a torch with a candlestick on the table beside him. The verse explains

The waxen torch is able to endure  
 The winds, when Aeolus puts them in ure,  
 It leads the way in darknesse of the night,  
 And, though the serene fall, it shewes his light:  
 The candle still lurks at home, and there doth show  
 Its light, not caring how the winds doe blow,  
 This as the houses joy at home doth stay,  
 The other still abroad doth make his way.  
 The hardy husband from his house goes forth  
 Seeking to compasse business of worth;  
 He sailes by rockes and sands, earely and late



*Qui me alit me extinguit.*

183



**E**VEN as the waxe dothe feede, and quenche the flame,  
 So, loue giues life; and loue, dispaire doth giue:  
 The godlie loue, doth louers crowne with fame:  
 The wicked loue, in shame dothe make them liue.  
 Then leaue to loue, or loue as reason will,  
 For, louers lewde doe vainlie languishe still.

He toiles, and seeks to purchase an estate:  
The wife at home much like a snaile she sits  
On hous-wifry employing all her wits:  
Ulysses in his travels hard did shift,  
Penelope at home did use her thrift.<sup>163</sup>

The significance of Jessica's move from inside to outside, from candlelight to torchlight is emphasised by her adopting male clothing. She symbolically moves from a feminine role, as subservient daughter, to a masculine one as breadwinner, providing the wealth needed for the venture. The importance of this change in sexual status, and the consequent change in social position, will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3, pp.140-1, below.

For Jessica, the use of the torch also indicates the secrecy of an elopement carried out in darkness, but it has another emblematic meaning. Shakespeare refers in *Pericles* to the common emblem of the torch which extinguishes itself where the fourth knight carries a shield with the emblem

Thaisa: A burning torch that's turned upside down;  
The word, 'Quod me alit, me extinguit',  
Simonides: Which shows that beauty hath his power and will,  
Which can as well inflame as it can kill.  
(*Pericles* II ii 32-35)

which is very close to Whitney's emblem *Qui me alit me extinguit*  
[Illustration 9]:

Even as the waxe dothe feede, and quenche the flame,  
So, love gives life; and love, dispaire doth give:  
The godlie love, doth lovers croune with fame:  
The wicked love, in shame dothe make them live.  
Then leave to love, or love as reason will,  
For, lovers lewde doe vainlie languishe still.<sup>164</sup>

Jessica carries a torch for Lorenzo, not as in the American usage, to symbolise unrequited love, but to represent their burning love for each other. This is not the 'lewde' love warned against in the verse: Lorenzo's admiration for Jessica is based on her virtues, not her body:

she is wise, if I can judge of her,  
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,  
And true she is, as she hath prov'd herself. (II vi 53-55)

They have a 'godlie' love for each other, and on a deeper level, Lorenzo's love for Jessica will bring her to God and save her soul. Launcelot believes that because Jessica was born a Jew, she is damned but Jessica responds:

I shall be sav'd by my husband; he hath made me a Christian.

(III v 16-17)

This reflects the Pauline belief that states 'the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband'.<sup>165</sup> The torch that Jessica carries for Lorenzo, therefore, will light her own way to heaven. The idea that light in the form of a lamp or torch represented life can be found in Horapollo's *Hieroglyphics*<sup>166</sup> where Green translates the emblem:

To intimate life they paint a burning lamp: because so long as the lamp is kindled it gives forth light, but being extinguished spreads darkness; so also the soul being freed from the body we are without seeing and light.<sup>167</sup>

Green quotes from *Antony and Cleopatra*:

... look,  
Our lamp is spent, it's out

(IV xv 84-85)

and

Since the torch is out,  
Lie down, and stray no farther

(IV xiv 45-46)

to substantiate his argument that Shakespeare must have been aware of this image, but he does not mention the more powerful references of *Othello*:

Put out the light, and then put out the light.  
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,  
I can again thy former light restore,  
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,  
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
I know not where is that Promethean heat  
That can thy light relume

(V ii 7-13)

and *Macbeth* 'Out, out, brief candle!' (V v 23) nor the specific reference to a torch as life in *1 Henry VI*

Here dies the dusky torch of Mortimer.

(II v 12)

While Jessica's torch represents not only her physical life, but the divine light of her soul, the relationship with the *Macbeth* quotation conjures up another image, that of the penitent. Lady Macbeth appears in a shift, carrying a candle, and as such reproduces the stock image of the repentant sinner, who was forced to walk to church, dressed only in a shift and carrying a candle as a symbol of her penitence.<sup>168</sup> Shakespeare was aware of this tradition, as can be seen in *2 Henry VI* (II iv) where the Duchess of Gloucester appears, walking through the streets, dressed in a white sheet and carrying a burning taper, as a penance imposed by the court for her part in summoning spirits, and he must surely have read the story of Jane Shore in Holinshed while working on *Richard III* in which she was made to do

open penance, going before the crosse in procession upon a sundaie  
with a taper in hir hand.<sup>169</sup>

While Lady Macbeth outwardly shows no remorse for her part in the crime, her behaviour when asleep, at which time her subconscious takes over, reveals her deep-seated feelings of guilt. Jessica, innocent of any guilt except her birth, in carrying her torch, assumes the attribute of the penitent, and manifests her willingness to abjure Judaism and convert to Christianity.

The candle is also used by several emblematisers to symbolise the dangers of falling in love, and the image usually represents a moth flying too near to the candle flame, and becoming singed.<sup>170</sup> In some cases the candlestick is depicted in the shape of a woman.<sup>171</sup> Love is both pleasurable and painful and can result in danger. In *The Merchant of Venice*, however, it is not the lovers themselves who are in danger, but the faithful friend, and the conflict between love and friendship forms another major theme of the play. The fifth stanza of Whitney's emblem *Perfidus familiaris* serves to show the importance to the Elizabethans of the cult of friendship.

But, if thou doe inioye a faithfull frende,  
See that with care, thou keepe him as thy life:  
And if perhappes he doe, that maye offende,  
Yet waye they frende: and shunne the cause of strife,  
Remembringe still, there is no greater crosse;  
Then of a frende, for, to sustaine the losse.<sup>172</sup>

To Bassanio, the worst thing that can happen is for him to lose Antonio; he is even (so he says) willing to sacrifice his newly-won wife whom he loves for the sake of his friend. Portia has to fight another court case, that of love vs. friendship, and to prove that the two are not entirely mutually exclusive, but the tension between the demands of love and friendship will be discussed in section 7. of Chapter 3 below.

## Chapter 2

### THE CASKETS

The scenes which show the choosing of the caskets are arranged to present a picture of a formal, ritualistic ceremony. Three suitors make their choice from three caskets, which Portia discloses by drawing back a curtain, and the test reveals the mental processes of the suitors' choices.

The testing of the suitors in the casket scenes are as much trial scenes as Act IV, scene i. Portia adheres to the law of the country, whether it be Belmont or Venice, and the other characters are obliged to do so too. Portia's suitors must agree to conditions before making their choice, and having failed, must keep their vows, however reluctantly. Shylock, like Morocco and Arragon, makes the wrong choice, choosing to pursue his revenge to the limits, and his perseverance in sticking to his misguided decision results in his losing not only the battle, but the war as well.

#### 1. The caskets as emblems

The three caskets represent the most overt reference to emblematic literature in the play. They are, in themselves, physical examples of a page from an emblem book, embodying the typical three-part structure of headline caption, artistic reality and explanatory verse. Each casket contains a motto - *Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire, Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves* and *Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath*; an illustration - a skull, a picture of a fool and a portrait of Portia; and a verse - for the gold casket:

All that glisters is not gold,  
Often have you heard that told;  
Many a man his life hath sold  
But my outside to behold.  
Gilded tombs do worms infold.  
Had you been as wise as bold,  
Young in limbs, in judgment old,  
Your answer had not been inscroll'd.  
Fare you well, your suit is cold.

(II vii 65-73)

for the silver casket:

The fire seven times tried this:  
Seven times tried that judgment is  
That did never choose amiss.  
Some there be that shadows kiss,  
Such have but a shadow's bliss.  
There be fools alive iwis  
Silver'd o'er, and so was this.  
Take what wife you will to bed,  
I will ever be your head.

So be gone; you are sped.

(II ix 63-72)

and for the lead casket:

You that choose not by the view,  
 Chance as fair and choose as true!  
 Since this fortune falls to you,  
 Be content and seek no new.  
 If you be well pleas'd with this,  
 And hold your fortune for your bliss,  
 Turn you where your lady is  
 And claim her with a loving kiss.

(III ii 131-138)

In each case the verse serves to explain the motto and symbolic illustration, as was the function of the emblem verses. The element of moralising is present in both emblems and caskets, and in a play which has its climax in a trial scene, the warning that true and wise judgement must be applied is a highly appropriate one. However, the caskets have a deeper function than a mere dramatic representation of the pages of an emblem book.

## 2. The fairy-tale element in the casket scenes

The episode of the caskets in *The Merchant of Venice* has been described by several critics as having a fairy-tale quality. The winning of a beautiful princess by performing some task, often of seeming impossibility and of a nature irrelevant to the wooing of the lady, is a common element in fairy stories. The apparent arbitrariness of the task imposed gives the tale its magical quality. Against this magic world is placed the business world of Venice, and the two would at first sight appear to be mutually incompatible. They are deliberately contrasted but are linked together by unrealistic or exaggerated elements in both. Hermann Ulrici points out that Schlegel justly remarks:

in the same way as the noble Antonio is made an agreeable contrast to the hateful Shylock, so we find that the lawsuit between them - which is indeed not absolutely unnatural, yet extremely unusual - has its counterpoise in the equally unusual courtship between Portia and Bassanio; the one is made probable by the other.'

The fairytale improbability is enhanced by the fact that a second pair of lovers, Gratiano and Nerissa, depend on the correct choice of Bassanio for their own happiness, a condition which has no logical reason; Ulrici goes on:

We may add that Portia's fate, owing to the obstinacy of her deceased father, appears bound to the decision of chance, and that, in contrast to this, her maid Nerissa voluntarily makes her own happiness dependent upon the fortune of her mistress; and that, again, their constrained will and inclinations form a decided

contrast to Jessica's voluntary choice, which offends both law and right.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The moral meaning of the caskets

Shakespeare's probable source for the story of the caskets would appear to be History 32 of the *Gesta Romanorum*<sup>3</sup> in which the virtuous daughter of the King of Ampluy is tested by the Emperor as to her worthiness to marry his son by giving her a choice of three vessels. The first, of gold set with precious stones, was filled with bones and engraved *Who so chooseth mee shall finde that he deserveth*. The second was of silver and contained earth and worms and was engraved *Who so chooseth me shall finde that his nature desireth* and the third was of lead, filled with precious stones and engraved *Who so chooseth mee, shall finde that God hath disposed for him*. The princess chooses the lead casket and is married to the Emperor's son. The history ends with a moralisation in which the princess is explained as the soul and the Emperor as Christ. The choice of vessel represents the choice between the paths of righteousness and evil, between life and death, and makes reference to Deuteronomy 30. 15-20 where Moses warns:

Beholde, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evill ... But if thine heart turne away, so that thou wilt not obey but shalt be seduced and worship other gods, and serve them, I pronounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish ... Therefore chose life, that both thou and thy sede may live By loving the Lord thy God, by obeying his voyce, and by cleaving unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy dayes: that thou maist dwel in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers; Abraham, Izhak and Iaakob, to give them.

Barbara K. Lewalski cites the moral implication of the caskets as representing Christian love in a romantic context; they 'signify everyman's choice of the paths to spiritual life or death'.<sup>4</sup> Throughout Bassanio's casket scene both he and Portia make frequent reference to 'life', 'love' and 'death':

Bassanio: Let me choose;  
For as I am, I *live* upon the rack ...  
There may as well be amity and *life*  
'Tween snow and fire as treason and *my love* ...  
Promise me *life*, and I'll confess the truth.

Portia: Well then, confess and *live*,

Bassanio: 'Confess' and '*love*'

(III ii 24-25, 30-31, 34-35) (my italics)

Portia: *Live* thou, I *live*

(III ii 61) (my italics)

Bassanio's choice will affect both he and Portia. Unlike Shylock, who lives for his material goods and declares life without them to be nonexistent

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  
 When you do take the means whereby I live. (IV i 369-372)

Bassanio and Portia live for love. They love each other, but Portia must be won according to the laws laid down by her father. She will not stoop to cheat, just as in the court scene she prevails over Shylock by *using* the law rather than evading or sidestepping it. Both Bassanio and Portia realise that the choice of the wrong casket will result in their death, spiritually and emotionally if not physically. This echoes the religious moralising of the *Gesta* story where the wrong choice is interpreted as the taking of the wrong path and its result in spiritual death, while the right choice leads to everlasting life.

#### 4. Getting and giving

Shakespeare has altered the *Gesta* inscriptions, transposing the gold and silver mottoes so that his gold casket carries the inscription *Who chooseth me, shall gain what many men desire* and the silver *Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves*. The major change is in the inscription of the lead casket; *Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath*. Zeydel's translation of Brant's *Of Foolish Plans* warns

If you would venture something bold,  
 Reserves are needed, cash and gold,  
 To reach your distant destination  
 Of which you dream without cessation ...<sup>5</sup>

the implication being that one must be prepared to spend in order to gain. The choice of the lead casket in Shakespeare's play, however does not relate solely to material gain, but embodies the image of man and his willing sacrifice to earn the great spiritual prize, and invites a comparison with the parable of the man who sold everything he had in order to buy a field in which a treasure was hidden.<sup>6</sup> The treasure symbolises Christ and the man who hazards everything to obtain the treasure is the Christian. Bassanio parallels the Christian in his willingness to risk everything to obtain the ultimate treasure, Portia. In the *Gesta* the choice is related to a willing submission to the will of God rather than an active search for spiritual/emotional fulfilment. However, in both cases the requirement on the part of the chooser is humility, and both Bassanio and the princess in the *Gesta* history show this quality, but in *The Merchant* a further quality is required, that of courage. The chooser must not only gamble on the choice of the caskets, but if he chooses the lead casket, on the prize as well. The silver and gold caskets both seem to promise good rewards; either what the chooser deserves or





10. Nicholas Hilliard, *Portrait of a Young Man among Roses* (c1587)  
13,6 x 7,3 cm, Salting Bequest, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

what many others desire. The lead casket only promises risk; the chooser must give away rather than receive anything. What Morocco and Arragon fail to realise is that love can only be received if it is given first, the exchange must be a free one.

Although the choice of the right casket is not impossible in its own right, it depends on a kind of lottery; and although Bassanio reasons his choice, he is also dependent on good fortune. In a fairy-tale world, fairy-tale conventions apply. As W. H. Auden points out, Belmont

is a world in which, ultimately good fortune is the sign of moral goodness, ill fortune of moral badness. The good are beautiful, rich and speak with felicity, the bad are ugly, poor and speak crudely.<sup>7</sup>

Bassanio, however much critics may like to accuse him of fortune-hunting, is representative of the ideal Renaissance young man, handsome and born to be admired both by men and women; the kind of young man depicted in the portrait miniature by Nicholas Hilliard of c1587<sup>8</sup> [Illustration 10]. Bassanio is not deceitful about his economic situation; he has explained to Portia that he has no fortune of his own, although not that he is in debt to his friend:

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,  
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  
I have engag'd myself to a dear friend,  
Engag'd my friend to his mere enemy  
To feed my means.

(III ii 255-265)

But until he receives the letter Bassanio has no reason to believe that Antonio is in any danger. His merchant ships are not all together, and the possibility of none of them reaching port is remote. Moreover, Antonio has assured Bassanio that he will be able to repay the money by a month before the deadline and insisted he takes as much time as he wants, without sparing a thought for Antonio. Bassanio leaves Venice before Shylock becomes aware of the loss of his daughter and his ducats, and is therefore unaware of the deterioration in Shylock's grasp on reality and his increasing obsession with revenge. It is hardly surprising, then, that he should concentrate solely on the matter in hand, the business of winning Portia.

154

Our Pelican, by bleeding, thus,  
Fulfill'd the Law, and cured Vs.



ILLVSTR. XX.

Book.3

**L**ooke here, and marke (her sickly birds to feed)  
How freely this kinde *Pelican* doth bleed.  
See, how (when other *Salves* could not be found)  
To cure their sorrowes, she, her selfe doth wound;  
And, when this holy *Emblem*, thou shalt see,  
Lift up thy soule to him, who dy'd for thee.  
For, this our *Hieroglyphick* would expresse  
That *Pelican*, which in the *Wildernesse*  
Of this vast *World*, was left (as all alone)  
Our miserable *Nature* to bemone;  
And, in whose eyes, the teares of pittie stood,  
When he beheld his owne unthankfull *Brood*  
His *Favours*, and his *Mercies*, then, contemne,  
When with his wings he would have brooded them:  
And, sought their endlesse peace to have confirm'd,  
Though, to procure his ruine, they were arm'd.  
To be their *Food*, himselfe he freely gave;  
His *Heart* was pierc'd, that he their *Soules* might save.  
Because, they disobey'd the *Sacred-will*,  
He, did the *Law of Righteousnesse* fulfill;  
And, to that end (though guiltlesse he had bin)  
Was offered, for our *Vniuersall-sinne*.  
Let mee Oh *God*! for ever, fixe mine eyes  
Vpon the Merit of that *Sacrifice*:  
Let me retaine a due commemoration  
Of those deare *Mercies*, and that bloody *Passion*,  
Which here is meant; and, by true *Faith*, still, feed  
Vpon the drops, this *Pelican* did bleed;  
Yea, let me firme vnto thy *Law* abide,  
And, ever love that *Flocke*, for which he dy'd.

## 6. Appearance and reality

The importance of the relationship and difference between appearance and reality is fundamental to the casket scenes and overlaps into the Venetian scenes. Most of the characters in the play are at some time deceived or affected by appearance. Morocco and Arragon are the most obvious in their mischoice of the caskets, but Antonio is deceived by Shylock's apparent friendship, Bassanio and Gratiano (and the rest of the court) fail to penetrate the disguises of Portia and Nerissa, Shylock fails to see the trap of his own bond, and even Old Gobbo is fooled by his son. Richard G. Moulton sees the casket scenes as

an idealisation of the commonest problem in everyday experience - what may be called the Problem of Judgment by Appearances ... Judgment by Appearances so defined is the only method of judgment proper to practical life, and accordingly an exalted exhibition of it must furnish a keen dramatic interest ... Clearly [it] will reach the ideal stage when there is the maximum of importance in the issue to be decided and the minimum of evidence by which to decide it.<sup>9</sup>

The caskets themselves, as has already been mentioned, are physical representations of an illustration from an emblem book but as with most of the pictorial emblems, they have a moral which is not always immediately recognisable. Morocco and Arragon take the visual aspect and the motto as separate entities and impose their own interpretation on what they see. Bassanio reacts to the unseen, unspoken message which enables him to reveal the real meaning. Emblem illustrations sometimes included background elements which gave deeper meaning to the moral when taken in conjunction with both main illustration and verse, but which were not mentioned in verse or motto. For instance, a picture of a pelican feeding its young from its own breast may have a verse extolling the virtue of parental love and sacrifice, but the verse may not refer to an inset in the background which shows the Crucifixion: George Wither's emblem *Pro lege et pro grege*<sup>10</sup> [Illustration 11] shows this scene, although he does expand on the religious overtones. Often, however, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions about the sacrifice by God the Father of his Son, and of Christ's dying in order to redeem mankind, but the deeper level of meaning is there for anyone who is prepared to look for it. Bassanio senses the hidden meaning of the caskets and is prepared to reject the temptation offered by the visual attractiveness of the gold and silver caskets.

Both Morocco and Arragon rely on their sense of sight to make their choice. They are impressed by the richness of the gold and silver caskets, and reject the lead almost immediately, relying on received values regarding the three metals. They go on to base their choice on a rationalisation of the mottoes of the caskets, but this apparent logic is coloured by their preconceptions regarding gold, silver and lead. Bassanio, on the other hand, rejects the outward appearance of the three caskets and ignores the mottoes altogether. As Sigurd Burckhardt says, Bassanio makes his

interpretation by *substance* rather than by letter ... he lets the metals themselves speak to him (quite literally: he apostrophizes them as speakers). Once before the caskets, he seems almost to forget Portia, himself and his purpose. He does not look for signs, pointers along the way to his goal; he stops - and listens to the things themselves. And so he wins.'

## 6. Morocco

### 6.a. Sight

Morocco begins II i with a plea for Portia not to judge him by his appearance, but his reasoning is erroneous; he will himself be guilty of this very fault and it becomes clear that he regards himself not as equal but as superior. Portia assures him calmly that he

then stood as fair

As any comer I have look'd on yet

For my affection.

(II i 20-23)

which may reassure him but not the audience, bearing in mind Portia's criticism of her list of suitors. When in II vii Morocco has to make his choice of the caskets he begins by reviewing their inscriptions. The caskets speak to him by means of his sight, he reads their meaning, but does not see beyond the superficial visual level. He instinctively reacts against the lead

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

(II vii 8) (my italics)

and dismisses it first of all after re-reading the inscriptions

Let me see;

I will survey th'inscriptions back again.

What says this leaden casket?

(II vii 13-15) (my italics)

His dependence on the outward show of things is evident from the beginning. In line twenty he reveals that he has already unconsciously chosen his casket

A *golden* mind stoops not to shows of dross. (II vii 20) (my italics)

He makes a good case for choosing the silver casket, and cannot think of a

solid reason why he should reject it, but he is strongly attracted to the gold. His view of Portia is not of a woman, but a possession and the golden casket takes on the form of a reliquary in which she is kept. She is a 'shrine, this mortal breathing saint' and 'an angel in a golden bed'. He is attracted by the idea of owning something which is desired and admired by others

The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds  
Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now  
For princes to come view fair Portia.  
The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head  
Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar  
To stop the foreign spirits, but they come  
As o'er a brook to see fair Portia. (II vii 41-47) (my italics)

Morocco sees Portia as a valuable object to be obtained for his collection, his real desire being to possess an object which others desire for themselves, and so wishes himself to be a source of envy. The motto of the gold casket promises just this - that he shall have what many other men desire - so that his character predisposes him to choose this casket. His view of Portia is not of a real flesh and blood woman with desires and passions of her own; such an idea does not occur to him and he makes little attempt to discover what her feelings in the matter are. Morocco would remove Portia (in the form of her painting) from the casket, only to put her back metaphorically, once he has won her, as his prize exhibit in a display case. Like Shylock, he confuses relationship with possession. Morocco regards Portia as a prize cup, to be kept in a glass-fronted sideboard and only taken out to be exhibited with pride to visitors.

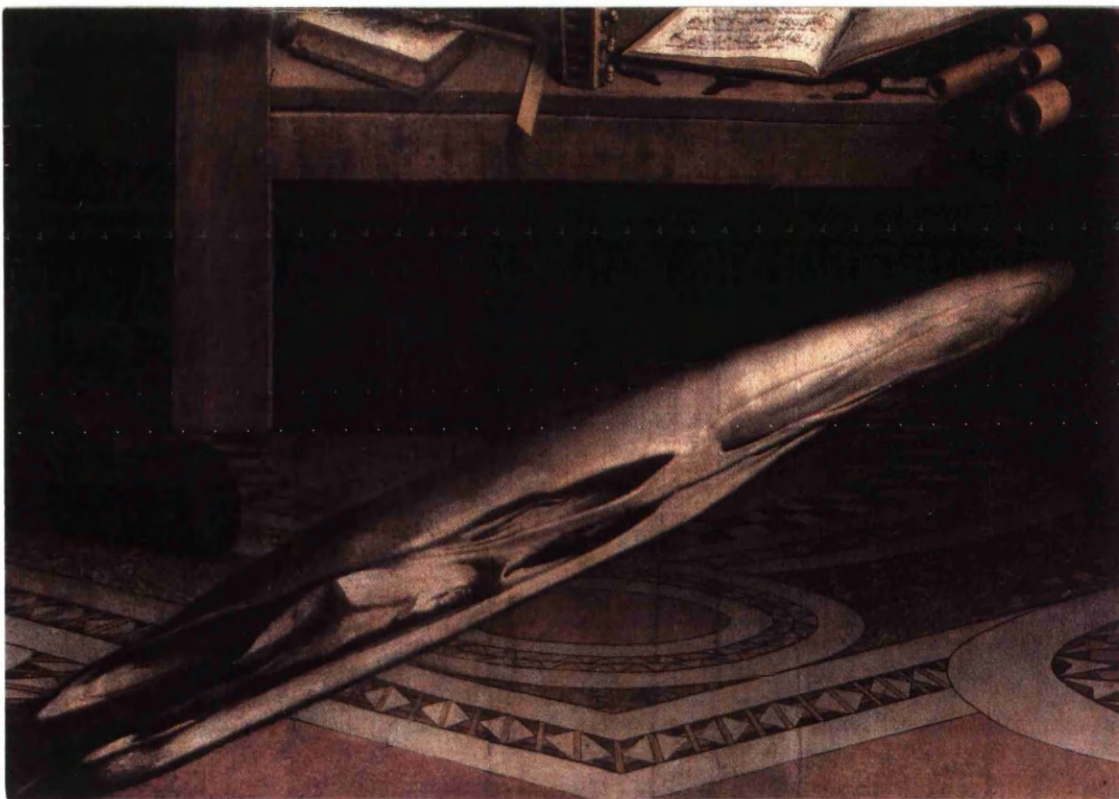
What Morocco finds in the gold casket is not, of course, what he expects. Although the proverb 'All that glisters is not gold' was a common one, significantly, Whitney uses it to illustrate a treacherous friend:

All is not goulde that glittereth to the eye:  
Some poison stronge, a sugred taste doth keepe:  
The crabbe ofte times, is beautifull to see,  
The Adder fell, within the flowers doth creepe:  
*The bravest tombe, hath stinking bones within:*  
So fawninge mates, have alwaies fathlesse bin.<sup>12</sup> (my italics)

The proverb therefore, when related to the emblem, has echoes elsewhere in the play with another major element of deception by appearance, that of Shylock's false friendship for Antonio. The emblem also brings into play the link with death.



12.a. Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors* (1533)  
Wood, 207 x 209 cm, The National Gallery, London



12.b. *The Ambassadors* detail of the anamorphic skull



## 6.b. The Skull

In *Pericles* the daughter of Antiochus is described as a 'glorious casket stor'd with ill' (I i 77) and traditionally, according to Mary Judith Dunbar,<sup>13</sup> allegorical links exist between the skull and lust, which may stem from the depiction of a skull at the foot of the cross in paintings of the Crucifixion where it represents not only the place, Golgotha, but the burial place of Adam, and was thus associated with the Fall and original sin.<sup>14</sup> Iconographically, however, the skull occurs repeatedly in Renaissance paintings as a *memento mori*, a reminder to the beholder of the life after death. These paintings are often of wealthy and important people, a famous example being Holbein's *Ambassadors*<sup>15</sup> [Illustration 12] in which the skull appears twice, once as a cap badge on Jean de Dinteville's hat, and once in anamorphosis on the floor before the two men. The painting contains a host of objects indicating the aristocratic interests and education of the sitters, but the skulls are a reminder that earthly possessions are of little true value and bring to mind the biblical admonishment to

Lay not up treasures for your selves upon the earth, where the mothe and canker corrupt, and where theeves digge through, and steale. But lay up treasures for your selves in heaven, where neither the mothe nor canker corrupteth, and where theeves neither digge through, nor steale. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.  
(Matthew, 6. 19-21)

and the story of the rich farmer who had no room to store his overabundant harvest, so decided to pull down the existing barns and storehouses and rebuild:

And I will say to my soule, Soule, thou hast much goods laide up for many yeres: live at ease, eate, drink, and take thy pastime. But God said unto him, O foole, this night will they fetch away thy soule from thee: then whose shal those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that gathereth riches to him self, and is not riche in God.  
(Luke, 12. 19-21)

An even fiercer warning appears in the General Epistle of James:

Go to now, ye riche men: weepe and howle for your miseries that shal come upon you. Your riches are corrupt, and your garments are motheaten. Your golde and silver is cankred; and the rust of them shalbe a witnes against you, and shal eate your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped up treasure for the last dayes. (James, 5. 1-3)

The warning appears in the emblem books in association with paganism and dark skin. Peacham's *Nec metuas nec optes* is illustrated with a hand holding a skull and carries the text:

The Aethiopian Princes at their feastes,  
Did use amid their cates, and costly cheere  
A deadmans head, to place before their gwestes,



8

*This Ragge of Death, which thou shalt see,  
Consider it; And Pious bee.*



ILLVSTR. VIII.

Book. I.

Hy, filly Man ! so much admirest thou  
 Thy present *Fortune* ? overvaluing so  
 Thy *Person*, or the beaurty of thy *Brow* ?  
 And *Clo'd*, so proudly, wherefore dost thou goe ?  
 Why dost thou live in riotous *Excesse* ?  
 And *Boast*, as if thy *Flesh* immorall were ?  
 Why dost thou gather so ? Why so oppresse ?  
 And, o're thy Fellow-creatures, *Dominere* ?  
 Behold this *Emblem* ; such a thing was hee  
 Whom this doth represent as now thou art ;  
 And, such a *Fleshlesse Raw-bone* shalt thou bee,  
 Though, yet, thou seeme to act a comelier part.  
 Observe it well ; and marke what *Yglineffe*  
 Stares through the sightlesse *Eye-holes*, from within :  
 Note those leane *Craggs*, and with what *Gastlinesse*,  
 That horrid *Countenance* doth seeme to grin.  
 Yea, view it well ; and having scene the same  
 Plucke downe that *Pride* which puffs thy heart so high ;  
 Of thy *Proportion* boast not, and (for shame)  
 Repent thee of thy sinfull *Vanity*.  
 And, having learn'd, that, all men must become  
 Such bare *Anatomies* ; and, how this *Fate*  
 No mortall *Powre*, nor *Wis*, can keepe thee from ;  
 Live so, that *Death* may better thy estate.  
 Consider who created thee ; and why :  
 Renew thy *Spirit*, ere thy *Flesh* decayes :  
 More *Pious* grow ; Affect more *Honestie* ;  
 And seeke hereafter thy *Creatours* praise.  
 So though of *Breath* and *Beauty* Time deprive thee,  
 New *Life*, with endlesse *Glorie*, *God* will give thee.

That it in minde might put them what they were:  
 And PHILLIP dayly caused one to say,  
 Oh King remember that thou art but clay.

If Pagans could bethinke them of their end,  
 And make such use of their mortalitie,  
 With greater hope their course let christians bend,  
 Unto the haven of heavens foelicitie;  
 And so to live while heere we drawe this breath,  
 We have no cause to feare, or wish for death.<sup>16</sup>

Morocco, therefore, cannot use his paganism as an excuse for a concern with gold: race and cultural upbringing cannot be used as a blanket explanation for alien behaviour; the character of the individual is always the true source of motivation. This applies not only to Morocco, but to Shylock, who uses his Jewishness as an excuse for his behaviour. The warning against laying up treasures on earth is particularly applicable to a dillittante like Morocco, but it has reverberations throughout the play in the characters of Arragon (as a foolish rich man) and Shylock (as an avaricious rich man).

Both Morocco and Arragon suffer from the sin of pride. Wither's emblem *This Ragge of Death, which thou shalt see, Consider it, And Pious bee* [Illustration 13] makes the connection between death, represented by the skeleton, and pride:

... That horrid Countenance doth seeme to grin  
 Yea, view it well; and having seene the same  
 Plucke downe that Pride which puffs thy heart so high;  
 Of thy Proportion boast not, and (for shame)  
 Repent thee of thy sinfull Vanity.  
 And, having learn'd, that, all men must become  
 Such bare Anatomies; and, how this Fate  
 No mortall Powre, nor Wit, can keepe thee from;  
 Live so, that Death may better thy estate ...<sup>17</sup>

and the condemnation of pride as the sin of a fool is expressed by Reason in Petrarch's *Physicke Against Fortune*:

... pryde is a sicknesse of wretches, and fooles: for doubtlesse they be suche that be proud, otherwyse I am sure they woulde never be proud, neyther is it written without cause in the booke of Wisedome: *That al that are foolysh and unfortunate, are proud about the measure of their soule ... He that is a king today, shal dye tomorrow. And when a man dyeth, he shal have serpentes, and beastes, and woormes for his inheritance.*<sup>18</sup>

However, the two princes exhibit different kinds of excessive pride. Whereas Morocco takes too much pride in his material possessions, Arragon's pride is directed at his own person. In both cases their vanity prevents them from regarding Portia as a flesh and blood woman. Arragon

is too concerned with his own worth to worry about Portia's feelings towards him. It would seem that she is already heartily sick of his pompous verbosity. Her

But if you fail, *without more speech*, my lord

You must be gone from hence immediately. (II ix 7-8) (my italics)

has an almost desperate ring about it.

## 7. Arragon

### 7.a. Speech

While the emphasis at the beginning of Morocco's scene was on vision, and the warning not to rely on sight, Arragon's scene begins with a warning against speech, which is entirely appropriate to a man who enjoys the sound of his own voice so much. He goes over the conditions again including the important one not to reveal his choice. His speech while making his choice follows Morocco in relying on the appearance and inscriptions of the caskets. Like Morocco he dismisses the lead casket immediately on sight:

You shall *look* fairer ere I give or hazard. (II ix 22)

Also like Morocco he makes a reasonable statement, but acts in a manner directly contrary to it. His statement on the gold casket is admirably right

What many men desire - that 'many' may be meant

By the fool multitude, that choose *by show*,

Not learning more than the *fond eye* doth teach;

Which pries not to th'interior. (II ix 25-28) (my italics)

but is spoilt by the fact that he has already discarded the lead casket for that very reason and the speech reveals that although he arrogantly considers himself to be superior to the 'fool multitude', he is, in fact, doing exactly what he accuses them of, and although he is blind to the irony of his words, the audience must be aware of it. His ultimate reason for rejecting the gold casket is not because of the untrustworthiness of appearances but because of his own arrogance; he

will not choose what many men desire,

Because I will not jump with common spirits,

And rank me with the barbarous multitudes. (II ix 31-33)

He returns to the silver casket and his reliance on speech

*Tell* me once more what title thou dost bear.

'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves,'

And *well said too* (II ix 35-37) (my italics)

And with that smug pat on the back he goes off into a digression on worthiness, finally asking for the key to the silver casket. Significantly, his opening of it renders him silent, as Portia says

Too long a pause for that which you find there. (II ix 53)

The scroll itself, in its first lines, refers to Psalm 12. 3, 7:

The Lord cut of al flattering lippes, and the tongue that speaketh proude things: ... The wordes of the Lord are pure wordes, as the silver, tried in a fornace of earth, fined seven folde.

It is Arragon's speech which has proved his downfall by revealing that he is the epitome of Pride. The 'silver'd o'er' casket, like the 'gilded tombs' of the gold casket which 'do worms infold' recalls Christ's accusation of the Scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

Wo be to you, Scribes and Pharises, hypocrites: for ye are like unto whited tombs, which appeare beautifull outward, but are within ful of dead mens bones, and of all filthines. So are ye also: for outwarde yee appeare righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisie and iniquitie.<sup>19</sup>

and a little earlier he denounces them as fools:

Ye fooles and blind, whether is greater, the gold, or the Temple that sanctifieth the gold? ... Ye fooles and blind, whether is greater, the offering, or the altar which sanctifieth the offering?<sup>20</sup>

Arragon and Morocco are both dazzled by the superficial attractiveness of the gold and silver, and are therefore blind to the true meaning of the caskets, and so are unable to unravel the riddle. Morocco is the heathen, unable to enter the kingdom of heaven (both paradisial and earthly in the form of marriage to Portia) because of his nonchristian background. This should be remembered in the context of Shylock, who is in a similar position. Arragon, although a Christian, fails to pass the spiritual test because of his overweening pride, and the picture of the blinking idiot which he receives from his casket is a reminder that he is not unique, as he seems to think, since all men are sinners, and for this reason Pharisaical pride is folly. Arragon's pride leads him into wrong surmises:

He is pufte up and knoweth nothing, but doteth about questions and strife of words, wherof commeth envie, strife, railings, evil surmisings. (I Timothy, 6. 4)

Shakespeare appears to see Arragon's fault as more serious than Morocco's. His treatment of the latter is more sympathetic; he makes Portia react in a more kindly way to the moor:

A *gentle* riddance (II vii 78) (my italics)

while she treats Arragon with a brusqueness which is just short of incivility. The difference between the two men is that Morocco's fault, occasioned by his birth, is no fault of his own, although he has done nothing to rectify it. His is a sin of omission, whereas Arragon's is of



14. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
'Instruction', no.13, p.4



15. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
'Prudence', no.251, p.63

commission; his self-love is so deep rooted that it has become unassailable.

#### 7.b. The mirror

It is tempting to think that what Arragon takes from the casket is not a picture, but a mirror. The mirror has a dual symbolism; it represents both Prudence and Wisdom, the ability to look both before and behind, but it is also a symbol of Pride and Vainglory.<sup>21</sup> Alciati and Whitney both use the mirror as a symbol of self knowledge in their emblems of the seven wise men:

Spartan Chilon used to order each person to know himself:  
a mirror in the hands, or a looking-glass will represent this.<sup>22</sup>

And *Knowe thy selfe*, did CHILON alwaies preache:  
The glasse behoulde, that thou the same maiste doe.<sup>23</sup>

Ripa's *Instruction* [Illustration 14] is represented by an old man 'of venerable aspect' holding a mirror

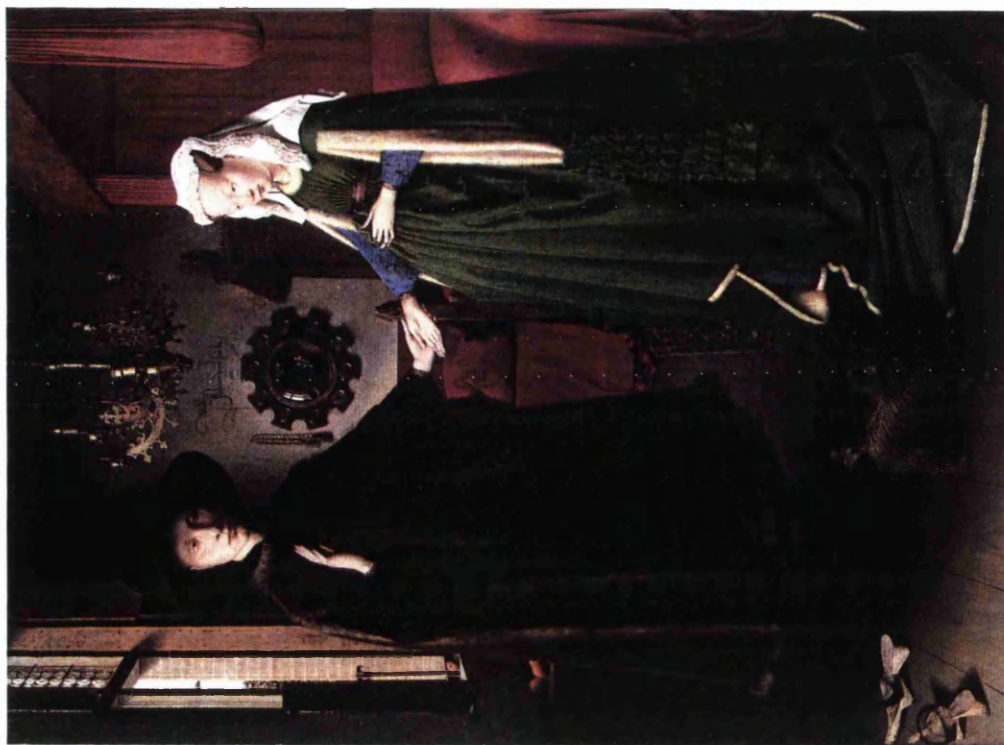
The Glass intimates that our Actions should be accommodated to those of other Men, to render'em praiseworthy; as the Motto declares, which advises to cast an Eye upon our own Faults, so that finding Blemishes in ourselves, we may endeavour to clear ourselves of 'em.<sup>24</sup>

and his *Prudence* [Illustration 15] holds a mirror which 'bids us examine our Defects by *knowing ourselves*<sup>25</sup>. The mirror is only an effective instrument of self knowledge if we see and accept a true reflection. Peacham's *Philautia* shows a beautiful virgin holding in one hand a poisonous snake and in the other a mirror, which she explains as symbolic of self-love's blindness to its own deformities:

Know how in Pride Selfe-love doth most surpasse,  
And still is in her Imperfections blind:  
And save her owne devises doth condemne,  
All others labours, in respect of them.<sup>26</sup>

The warnings in the emblem books were a reflection of an accepted idea, as can be seen in the popularity of the *Myrrour for Magistrates*,<sup>27</sup> which provided a pattern of behaviour, and which shows the awareness of the necessity for seeing the truth clearly in an accurate, rather than distorted, vision. It is in this connection that Henry V is referred to as 'the mirror of all Christian kings' (*Henry V*, II prologue 6), Salisbury as a 'mirror of all martial men' (*1 Henry VI*, I iv 74) and the wisdom of Henry IV as 'a mirror to the wisest' (*3 Henry VI*, III iii 84).

While the image put forward by *A Myrrour for Magistrates* and the emblem books is lucid in its representation in prose, poetry and graphics, in



16. Jan Van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Marriage* (1434)  
 Wood, 81.8 x 59.7 cm, The National Gallery, London  
 a. *The Arnolfini Marriage*  
 b. *The Arnolfini Marriage*  
 Detail of the mirror

reality mirrors in the Renaissance were rarely flat, usually having a convex surface which reflected a large area, but with a distorted image, as in Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Marriage*<sup>28</sup> [Illustration 16] where nearly the whole room is reflected. This distortion is a part of the opposing imagery of the mirror, as a symbol of vanity. In such a convex mirror Arragon might not necessarily recognise his own image. Ironically, the distorted image is more real to the audience than Arragon's self-image. We see him as a self-opinionated fool, while he sees himself as entirely worthy and admirable. His inability to see himself as he truly is would be highlighted by his inability to recognise his own reflection. The real distortion of a convex mirror, however, is not the primary reason that Arragon fails to recognise himself. The fool who, rather than seeing his true reflection in the mirror of self-knowledge, blinds himself to his faults appears in Barclay's condemnation *Of fooles that stande so well in their owne conceit, that they thinke none so wise, stronge, fayre, nor eloquent, as they are themself*:

Unto my ship I call him to be Cooke,  
The meate to dresse to other fooles eche one,  
Which in his mirrour doth alway gase and looke,  
When he may get him unto a place alone:  
And though of colour and beautie he have none,  
Yet thinketh he him selfe faire and right pleasant,  
And wise, though that he be mad and ignorant.

In his owne deedes is onely his delite,  
In his owne conceite thinking him selfe rightwise  
And fayre, though he be yelow as kite  
Is of her feete, yet doth he still devise  
His vayne mirrour, that onely is his gise:  
And though he beholde him selfe of lothly shape,  
He will it not beleve, but in his glasse doth gape.

... But strongly it defende and eke deny,  
He seeth not his eares longe and hye,  
Which stande upon his foolishe hood behinde,  
His lewde conceyt thus maketh him starke blinde.<sup>29</sup>

That Shakespeare was aware of the symbolism of the mirror can be seen in *Richard II*, IV 1 where Richard calls for a mirror

That it may show me what a face I have  
Since it is bankrupt of his majesty. (266-267)

Richard has lost his throne through his own weakness and inability to see that simply *being* a king is not enough, one must actively *rule*. He is surprised that the mirror does not reflect his present agony, he calls it a flatterer and beguiler and finally dashes it to the floor in disgust. Arragon sees not flattery but truth, but is equally unable to accept the



reflection. Shakespeare introduces the image of the mirror at the end of *King Lear*, where Lear calls for a glass to check whether Cordelia is breathing.<sup>30</sup> Although in this case, Lear is using the mirror as a practical object, it is still an object which holds the possibility of distorting nature. If it mists, it will show that Cordelia lives; Lear's overwhelming desire to prove his youngest daughter still alive encourages him to fool himself and although he knows rationally that she must be dead, he refuses to accept the fact. Hamlet's advice to the players commands them to

hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her own  
feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time  
his form and pressure. (Hamlet III ii 22-25)

and while this is admirable advice on the practicalities of acting, it is also a comment on what function Hamlet intends the play-within-a-play to perform. He intends to hold up a mirror to Claudius, which will reflect accurately the latter's actions in murdering Hamlet's father. Claudius, by looking in the mirror of the actors' performance, will be forced to see and acknowledge the truth of his crime, and will, through this, be forced also to see into the depths of his own soul - at least, so Hamlet hopes. The reason that Hamlet's plan does not work in the way he had intended is, perhaps, because Claudius, like Arragon, refuses to see the true image that the mirror reflects, and therefore blinds himself to what may seem obvious to the audience.

#### 7.c. The shadow

Although Arragon's scroll does not refer to a mirror or a glass, it speaks of

Some there be that *shadows* kiss,  
Such have but a *shadow's* bliss: (II ix 66-67) (my italics)

and Bolingbroke refers to Richard's mirror in the same terms

The *shadow* of your sorrow hath destroy'd  
The *shadow* of your face. (Richard II, IV i 292-293) (my italics)

'Shadow' in this connection is used in the sense of reflection, and if the 'shadow' of Arragon's scroll refers to a mirror, the implication is that he kisses, and is therefore in love with, himself alone. This fits the character that Shakespeare has portrayed, and also provides a warning that self-love is not only inferior in enjoyment and fulfilment, but is totally barren. John Russell Brown suggests that

There be fools alive iwis  
Silver'd o'er, and so was this. (II ix 68-69)

refers to the apparent wisdom of those whose hair has turned silver,<sup>31</sup> an

assumption that age brings wisdom which was proverbial, and which Shakespeare quotes himself later in the play when the Duke reads Bellario's letter concerning Baltazar/Portia:

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 ... (IV i 159-161)

Brown cites Metellus Cimber's comments on Cicero in *Julius Caesar* as evidence:

O, let us have him; for his silver hairs  
Will purchase us a good opinion. (*Julius Caesar* II i 144-145)

but Pooler suggests that the lines imply that the fools' wealth conceals their folly.<sup>32</sup> However, it may refer to the silvery, polished surface of a looking-glass, and to the self-deception which other fools have practised in front of such objects before. Mirrors are, by their nature deceptive. Thomas Whythorne, commenting on his sitting for a portrait in 1562, put forward the advantages of a painting over a mirror as a record of oneself, mirrors only recording a present image, and that in reverse, whereas paintings were able to record a past image, hence:

... divers do cause their counterfeits to be made, to see how time  
doth alter them from time to time; so thereby they may consider  
with themselves how they ought to alter their conditions, and to  
pray to God that, as they do draw towards their long home and end  
in this world, so they may be the more ready to die in such sort as  
becometh true Christians.<sup>33</sup>

Shadows are referred to in connection with portraits; as Brown points out, 'shadow' was used of anything fleeting and unsubstantial and Shakespeare uses the word often in this connection (Marvin Spevack<sup>34</sup> lists 70 references to 'shadow' in Shakespeare's plays, many of which have this meaning), but Brown also refers to Pooler's suggestion that the scroll may be making an allusion to the custom of kissing portraits, and cites Webster's *White Devil* II ii 25-8.<sup>35</sup> Arragon's prize is 'the portrait of a blinking idiot', and it is clear that it manifests in an image, whether a reflection in a mirror, or a more solid portrait miniature. Shakespeare uses the term 'shadow' in reference to portraits in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

Proteus: Madam, if your heart be so obdurate,  
Vouchsafe me yet your picture for my love,  
The picture that is hanging in your chamber;  
To that I'll speak, to that I'll sigh and weep;  
For, since the substance of your perfect self  
Is else devoted, I am but a shadow;  
And to your shadow will I make true love.

Julia: [*Aside*] If 'twere a substance, you would, sure, deceive it  
And make it but a shadow, as I am.

Silvia: I am very loath to be your idol, sir;  
 But since your falsehood shall become you well  
 To worship shadows and adore false shapes,  
 Send to me in the morning, and I'll send it ...  
 (IV ii 115-127)

Silvia: Ursula, bring my picture there.  
 Go, give your master this. Tell him from me,  
 One Julia, that his changing thoughts forget,  
 Would better fit his chamber than this shadow.  
 (IV iv 113-116)

Silvia sees the danger in worshipping an image - a shadow - rather than the real thing, and in this sense the portrait is seen as deceptive, a 'false shape'. Proteus' love is seen as a superficial infatuation rather than a deeply felt emotion, and his selfish and arrogant behaviour is condemned. Like Morocco and Arragon, he treats the object of his worship as an inanimate prize, although, like Portia's suitors, he is not primarily interested in her wealth. Morocco and Arragon woo Portia for the kudos of having such a beautiful, desirable, aristocratic wife. They are egotists, but not greedy, and in this they contrast to Shylock. Bassanio is attracted to Portia's money, but he is not egoistical, nor is he interested solely in her wealth. He sees her clearly, not as a shadow, but as a fully rounded person, flesh and blood, with virtues and character as well as a fortune. His acceptance of her as a living being is set against Morocco's attitude to her as a unique collector's item, and Arragon's rather condescending desire to bestow on her the glory of his name. Neither Morocco nor Arragon see either Portia or themselves clearly, believing that they are more than worthy of her, whereas Bassanio approaches the test with humility and clear-sightedness.

Clear appraisal of both ourselves and others is therefore seen as morally and spiritually beneficial. In *Timon of Athens* Apemantus links together shadows, self-deception and folly:

Varro's Servant: How dost, fool?  
 Apemantus: Dost dialogue with thy shadow?  
 Varro's Servant: I speak not to thee.  
 Apemantus: No, 'tis to thyself ...  
 All Servants: What are we, Apemantus?  
 Apemantus: Asses.  
 All Servants: Why?  
 Apemantus: That you ask me what you are, and do not know  
 yourselves.  
 (*Timon* II ii 55-58, 64-69)

and it is clear that in the person of Arragon, Shakespeare has provided a character who exhibits these three elements.

8. Bassanio

Unlike Morocco and Arragon, Bassanio is not seduced by the outward appearance of the caskets. He does not read the inscriptions aloud, and rejects both the outward sound of things

In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt  
But, being season'd *with a gracious voice*,  
Obscures the show of evil? (III ii 75-77) (my italics)

and the outward show

In religion,  
What damned error but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,  
*Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?* (III ii 77-80)

and goes on to discuss beauty made with cosmetics, golden hair with wigs and a lovely veil hiding a dark skin. As is appropriate in this play, he also uses a sea metaphor

Thus ornament is but the guiled shore  
To a most dangerous sea (III ii 97-98)

8.a. Silence

It was Sigmund Freud who pointed out a relationship between *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*.<sup>36</sup> He likened Cordelia to the lead casket; both remain dumb. He points out that symbolically both traditionally and in psycho-analysis a casket, or indeed any form of enclosed container, represents the maternal body and therefore the essence of womanhood. While Bassanio has to make his choice from three caskets, Lear has to choose between his three daughters. In each case it is the least obvious choice which proves to be the valid one. The gold and silver caskets hold unpleasant reminders of man's foolishness and mortality, while Goneril and Regan, although appearing on the surface loving and anxious to please their father, are revealed as avaricious, ambitious and heartless. Their fulsomely ornate speeches of filial love are as meaningless as the ornate decoration of the gold and silver caskets. In each case the outside does not only *not* reflect the inside, it hides its opposite. The two caskets are as loud in their praise of themselves visually as the two sisters are verbally, but the lead casket, like Cordelia, is silent.

Bassanio: ... but thou, thou meagre lead,  
Which rather threaten'st than dost promise aught,  
Thy plainness moves me more than eloquence.  
(III ii 104-106)

Cordelia: What shall Cordelia speak?  
Love, and be silent ...  
... I am sure my love's  
More ponderous than my tongue...  
Nothing, my lord ...

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave  
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty  
According to my bond; no more nor less.

(*King Lear* I i 61, 76-77, 86, 90-92)

Like Goneril and Regan, Morocco, Arragon and Shylock rely heavily on the power of language, and all fall into the trap of taking a pride in their eloquence. Morocco takes as much pleasure in the elaborate word pictures he constructs to express his admiration of Portia as in the woman herself, and Arragon is obviously in love with the sound of his own voice. Shylock delights in making verbally complex justifications of his actions, although he avoids the word-painting of Morocco. All three are proud of the control they believe they have over language, but such pride is a target for moralists, and eloquence without modesty is seen as unenviable, as Petrarch's *Of Eloquence* makes clear:

Ioy: The plentie of myne eloquence is very great.  
Reason: If it be ioyned with modesty, I doo not denie but that it  
is an excellent thyng, and surpassyng the common measure  
of men: other wyse it were better to be dumbe.<sup>37</sup>

Dumbness therefore becomes associated with humility and modesty. The lead casket is dumb, as is Cordelia, and its humility transfers itself to its chooser, Bassanio, as the gaudiness representative of pride (as in Goneril and Regan) of the gold and silver caskets becomes a personification of the pride of their selectors, Morocco and Arragon.

The idea that a fool reveals his stupidity by too much speaking is proverbial, stemming from Proverbs, 30. 32:

If thou hast bene foolish in lifting thy selfe up, and if thou hast  
thought wickedly, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.

and became a favourite moral with the emblem writers. Whitney expands Alciati's simple verse to seven stanzas which quote both classical and biblical authorities. His fifth and sixth stanzas read:

Not that distroyes, into the mowthe that goes,  
But that distroyes, that forthe thereof doth comme;  
For wordes doe wounde, the inwarde man with woes,  
Then wiselie speake, or better to bee domme  
The tounge, althowghe it bee a member smal,  
Of man it is the best, or worste of all.

The foole, is thought with silence to be wise,  
But when he prates, him selfe he dothe bewraye:  
And wise men still, the babler doe dispise,  
Then keepe a watche when thou haste owght to saie,  
What labour lesse, then for to houlde thy peace,  
Which aged daies, with quiet doth increase.<sup>38</sup>

Willet also puts forward the same idea:

Why doth the student sit alone  
 With hand his mouth eke put upon,  
     when he to speake hath skill?  
 This gesture silence doeth declare,  
 The wiseman oft his wordes doeth spare,  
     the foole his mouth doeth fill.  
 Let us then take heede to our tounge,  
 The foole the wise is thought among,  
     while that his lippes are still.<sup>39</sup>

Ironically, with Cordelia, Shakespeare is twisting the moral of the emblem by making the point that although Cordelia remains silent, she is *not* considered wise. Her silence is misunderstood by her foolish father, with the implication that it is not sufficient to be wise enough to be silent, you must be wise enough to understand silence too. Barclay points out the value of the man or woman who can keep silent:

But that man or woman, or any creature,  
 That litle speaketh, or els keepeth silence,  
 Are ever of them most stedfast and sure,  
 Without envy, hatred, or malivolence:<sup>40</sup>

Gratiano is an example of the man who fills meaningful silence with meaningless talk, and Bassanio's apprehension about how the noisy Gratiano will fit into the essentially quiet Belmont is valid: Gratiano thinks

... silence is only commendable  
 In a neat's tongue dried, and a maid not vendible.      (I i 111-112)

and as Bassanio comments:

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in  
 all Venice.      (I i 114-115)

Gratiano's compulsion to talk he sees as a reflection of his lack of wisdom

... 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.      (I i 115-118)

the implication being that by exercising his tongue so much he stops his brain working; he gives himself no time to think or reflect, speech has replaced thought. The importance of weighing one's words before speaking finds expression in Ecclesiasticus, where three significant motifs in *The Merchant of Venice*, silver and gold, language, and balances, are found together:

Binde up thy silver and golde, and weigh thy wordes in a balance,  
 and make a door and a barre (and a sure bridle) for thy mouth.  
     (Ecclesiasticus, 28. 25)

Bassanio realises the importance of thinking before speaking, and of the silence of Belmont in contrast to the noisy bargaining and riotous partying of Venice. As he says when Gratiano pleads to be allowed to accompany him on the trip

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  
 I be misconstr'd in the place I go to  
 And lose my hopes.

(II ii 166-174)

Gratiano's reply may well make anyone even more wary of his intentions; his assurance that he will act the part of a puritan and a perfect hypocrite cannot be said to encourage confidence. However, his behaviour during Bassanio's election of the casket is all the latter could wish; he doesn't utter a sound until after the choice has been made and the lady won, and then his words are of a more sober cast than his earlier exuberant quips. Evidently the atmosphere of Belmont has rubbed off on him also, or perhaps he has finally met his match in Nerissa. She has certainly run him to a standstill:

For wooing here until I sweat again,  
 And swearing till my very roof was dry  
 With oaths of love ...

(III ii 204-206)

In fact, his wooing and swearing have little effect in the quiet of Belmont, until after his silent support of Bassanio during the casket-choosing. Bassanio's victory releases Gratiano to make his claim on Nerissa, and having won her, his exuberance reasserts itself, although to a lesser extent; he retains a degree of sobriety which he has acquired in Belmont until, back in Venice and removed from the restraint of Belmont (and that of Nerissa herself), his contempt and anger at Shylock erupts in the trial scene.

It is not only the visual appearance of something or someone which can be misleading, but the sounds it makes or the words they speak. Both Morocco and Shylock quote authorities which, if taken at face value would make them appear as admirable characters but, as John Doeblar remarks,

Shakespeare seems to be using both Morocco and Shylock to indicate that not only must an audience be aware of distinctions between appearance and reality, they must also learn to know when the iconic appearance is the reality, even when a character deceptively quotes the authority of the Bible or standard moral sentiments.<sup>41</sup>

The audience has to decide not only on visual, but also on aural veracity. Shakespeare shows that words, however reliable the source, can be misused and their original meaning twisted to such an extent that they seem to be stating the opposite. The only reliable information comes from silence,

which cannot be made to lie, although it can be misinterpreted and misunderstood.

That silence itself can be eloquent can be seen in the fact that Bassanio has already had some intimation of Portia's feelings for him before he sets out on his venture. As he tells Antonio

... Sometimes from her eyes  
I did receive fair speechless messages. (I i 163-164)

The significance is in the *silence* of the messages. They speak eloquently, but Portia avoids breaking the trust her father has placed on her by openly avowing her interest in Bassanio. Nevertheless, Bassanio has sensed a reciprocal feeling and this shows that he is sensitive to silence; unlike Lear he will not misunderstand Portia's muteness. Bassanio's sensitivity to the 'speechless messages' of the caskets enables him to free Portia from her bondage, whereas the focusing of Morocco and Arragon on *words* served only to prolong her imprisonment in the tomb of the caskets. This attitude to silence and eloquence reflects Shakespeare's own feelings as expressed in the Sonnets:

O, let my looks be then the eloquence  
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;  
Who plead for love and look for recompense,  
More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.  
O, learn to read what silent love hath writ.  
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit. (Sonnet 23, 9-14)

The power of silence, and the stifling constriction of speech are referred to in another sonnet:

This silence for my sin you did impute,  
Which shall be most my glory, being dumb;  
For I impair not beauty, being mute,  
When others would give life, and bring a tomb. (Sonnet 83, 9-12)

The power of silence over language is seen in the inability of language to express the deepest emotions. The sonnets above refer to this, but *The Merchant of Venice* reveals an example in action in the scene containing Bassanio's choice which begins very differently to those of the two earlier suitors. Portia, who in dealing with her other suitors has remained calm and aloof, is with Bassanio virtually incoherent. Her speech is broken up, she begins a sentence or a thought but does not finish it, she interrupts herself and at one point she makes a classic Freudian slip which she immediately tries to rectify

One half of me is yours, the other half yours, -  
Mine own, I would say: but if mine, then yours,  
And so all yours. (III ii 16-18)

Nowhere else in the play do we find Portia in such a linguistic state.



Like Shylock, when she is dealing with something which touches her deepest emotions, she becomes inarticulate. Her exchange with Bassanio regarding the rack and torture indicates the agony that both feel; they want to know, but fear the answer.

Portia is not the only character in the play to become incoherent when her deepest emotions are touched: Shylock, the master of language, who is able to twist the scriptures to his own use, becomes less eloquent and increasingly repetitive as his obsession with revenge takes hold. His anger and hate are so strong that mere words cannot cope with their expression.

The relationship of lead and silence has already been pointed out, but Freud goes on to explore the idea that in traditional stories silence represents death and that in man's refusal to accept his own mortality, this meaning was transferred to love and re-birth, so that the silent third woman of the fairy-story becomes the object of love. This relation between lead/silence/death extends further in *The Merchant of Venice* because although the word casket was not in Shakespeare's time used in connection with coffins, lead was often used to wrap up corpses before burial.<sup>42</sup> In the play, however, a reversal takes place. The gold casket holds the symbol of death, the skull, while the lead holds the lovers' promise for a life of happiness, Portia's portrait. The lead casket, therefore, through its association with death, represents a resurrection, a re-birth into a new, prosperous and fertile life, and as such reflects also the physical salvation of Antonio and the spiritual re-birth of Shylock after the trial.

#### 9. Does Portia cheat?

While Bassanio rejects appearance as a basis for choice, Richard G. Moulton points out that reasoning is also useless in this test.<sup>43</sup> The lead casket's scroll reads 'Chance as fair, and choose as true' not *more* fair or *more* true. The winning choice must be made by instinct, by inherent worthiness, rather than by rationalisation; by the heart rather than by the head.

Morocco and Arragon are too concerned with the prize they are attempting to win to concentrate on the caskets themselves in this way. To the two foreigners the caskets are clues to the puzzle, rather than the puzzle

itself, and their perspective is therefore faulty. It would be demeaning Shakespeare's dramatic sense of rightness to suggest, as several critics have, that Portia gives the game away by dropping hints to Bassanio. One critic has even suggested that she *points* to the lead casket!<sup>44</sup> - a suggestion which goes directly against all the textual evidence. It has also been suggested that when she says to Bassanio at the beginning of the scene

I pray you tarry; pause a day or two  
Before you *hazard*; for, in choosing wrong,  
I lose your company (III ii 1-3) (my italics)

she is directing him to the motto of the lead casket - to give and *hazard* all he hath - but she uses the same word to both Morocco and Arragon before their choices. To Morocco

First, forward to the temple. After dinner  
Your *hazard* shall be made. (II i 44-45) (my italics)

and to Arragon

To these injunctions every one doth swear  
That comes to *hazard* for my worthless self.  
(II ix 17-18) (my italics)

As both Morocco and Arragon are clue-hunters, and Bassanio is not it would be unrealistic to suppose that Bassanio would pick up the reference while the other two suitors miss it.

A more serious accusation of cheating has been posited<sup>45</sup> in the song which Portia initiates while Bassanio makes his choice, but the fact that the end rhymes of the first verse are 'bred', 'head' and 'nourished' which rhyme with 'lead' cannot be taken as a serious clue for Bassanio, nor can the subject of the song. It is made clear that the music is simply a background to Bassanio's choice; he is not aware of it at all as the stage directions suggest:

*A Song the whilst Bassanio comments on the caskets to himself.*  
(III ii 63)

We seem to arrive in the middle of Bassanio's meditation; he begins abruptly with 'So may the outward shows be least themselves'. We do not hear his reasoning for the rejection of the gold and silver caskets as we have heard Morocco and Arragon; he is already launched on an exploration of the deceptiveness of appearances, and so is unlikely to have been influenced by the words of the song.

The lyrics of the song relate to the business of the choice of caskets. As Moulton says:

'Fancy' in Shakespearean English means 'love'; and the discussion, whether love belongs to the head or the heart, is no inappropriate accompaniment to a reality which consists in this - that the success in love of the suitors, which they are seeking to compass by their reasonings, is in fact being decided by their characters.<sup>46</sup>

Although the song warns that love that is based only on visual attraction is not lasting, and therefore intimates the dangers of relying on outward appearance, Bassanio's speech shows no awareness of the lyrics. He is completely wrapped up in the difficulty of puzzling out the problem, and is totally unaware of any external stimulus. As he ignores the outward show of the caskets themselves, so he ignores the outside sounds of the song. His choice is not based on the senses but on the heart. His reaction on reading the scroll inside the lead casket is one of derangement of the senses

Like one of two contending in a prize,  
That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,  
*Hearing* applause and universal shout,  
Giddy in spirit, still *gazing* in a doubt  
Whether those *peals* of praise be his or no

(III ii 141-145) (my italics)

Eyes/hearing and gazing/peals suggest an overturning of the usual relation of the senses of seeing and hearing, and it is these two senses which appear prominently in the three suitors' choices.

Theobald emended 'paleness' to 'plainness' as being more in keeping with 'eloquence' and avoiding a repetition of 'pale' which had been used to describe silver, but Brown points out in his annotation

... Farmer showed that pale was often used of lead (e.g., *Rom.*, II v 17). Moreover it was a commonplace to talk of the "colours of rhetoric", and so coloured *eloquence* might be contrasted with *paleness*.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, the juxtaposition of a visual with an aural quality reflects Bassanio's later confusion between the two in lines 142-145 quoted above, and is symbolic of his rejection of a reliance on either sight or sound to procure the answer to the problem.

#### 10. Music

The significance of music at this point is underlined by the only other appearance of music in the play, during the final Act. At both times the music heralds an important event in the romantic relationship between Bassanio and Portia. Indeed, as far as Bassanio is concerned, they are the only two occasions in the play where he comes together with Portia. The music symbolises romantic harmony, although in both cases that union is

about to be put in jeopardy, first in the risk involved in Bassanio's choice of casket and in his later abrupt return to a threatening situation in Venice, and second in the discovery of his bestowal of his betrothal ring on a comparative stranger and its threat to his love and marriage. The dangers are successfully negotiated and harmony is restored.

Shylock cannot respond to music, as he admits in II v 27-35, and this marks him down as being lacking in humanity. As Lorenzo later states:

The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus.  
Let no such man be trusted. (V i 83-88)

Shylock's rejection of music is a reflection of his rejection of the mercy and compassion of Christianity and the New Law. Wither, in his emblem *Though Musicke be of some abhor'd, She is the Handmaid of the Lord* points to the relationship between devotional faith and music:

To Musicke, and the Muses, many beare  
Much hatred; and to whatsoever ends  
Their Soule delighting Raptures tuned are,  
Such peevish dispositions it offends ...  
For, Musicke, is the Handmaid of the LORD,  
And, for his Worship, was at first ordayned;  
Yea, therewithall she fitly doth accord;  
And, where Devotion thriveth, is reteyned.  
Shée, by a nat'rall power, doth helpe to raise,  
The mind to God, when joyfull Notes are sounded:  
And, Passions fierce Distemperatures, alaies;  
When, by grave Tones, the Mellody is bounded.  
It, also may in Mysticke sense, imply  
What Musicke, in our selves, ought still to be;  
And, that our jarring lives to certifie,  
Wee should in Voice, in Hand, and Heart, agree:  
And, sing out, Faiths new songs, with full concent,  
Unto the Lawes, ten-stringed Instrument.<sup>48</sup>

Even more than a reflection of divinity, music was regarded as a balm for troubled minds, and Shakespeare uses this idea to restore both King Lear and Pericles to sanity and harmony (*King Lear* IV vii and *Pericles* V i). The belief that music could cure melancholy, mania and also deafness stems from Pythagoras, whose followers worshipped Apollo, god of light, healing and music.<sup>49</sup> Apollo's son was Aesculapius, god of medicine, around which the Pythagorean doctors developed a cult which believed in the curative properties of music. Harmonious music was thought to have a beneficial

effect on patients suffering from imbalance in the emotions, although there was another school of thought, founded in the writings of Hippocrates and followed by Galen, which held that music was detrimental to mental health, and could even cause madness,<sup>50</sup> and Shakespeare also makes use of this in *Richard II* where Richard rejects the music because it 'mads me' (*Richard II* V v 61). This theory was, however, less popular, and the healing powers of music were promoted by Boethius in *De Musica*. He and his followers based their beliefs on the writings of Asclepiades of Bithynia, a physician practising in the first century BC,<sup>51</sup> and quoted as Biblical precedent the story of David dispelling King Saul's depression by playing his harp:

And so when the evill spirit of God came upon Saul, David tooke an harpe and played with his hand, and Saul was refreshed, and was eased: for the evil spirit departed from him. (I Samuel, 16. 23)

The theory that the human mind and body responded to music in an instinctive and subconscious manner can be found in the writings of Johannes Kepler:

It is the custom of some physicians to cure their patients by pleasing music. How can music work in the body of a person? Namely in such a way that the soul in the person, just as some animals do also, understands the harmony, is happy about it, is refreshed and becomes accordingly stronger in its body.<sup>52</sup>

Shylock's rejection of music symbolises, therefore, a rejection of spiritual and physical harmony and it is significant that music only makes an appearance in Belmont. Venice is deliberately bereft of music - the masque is aborted - and Shylock establishes an antipathy to music which, although it may not extend to the other citizens, colours the Venetian ambience and creates, in contrast to the peaceful, well-run harmony of Belmont, a jarring, noisy and discordant atmosphere.

Portia's speech calling for a song while Bassanio makes his choice shows her fear of his failure in its relation to death and a 'swan-song' but it also foreshadows the music of the final act:

... such it is,  
As are those dulcet sounds in break of day  
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear  
And summon him to marriage. (III ii 50-53)

The final act turns the poetry into reality when it combines the music with the dawn as both Portia and Bassanio return to Belmont to consummate their marriage.

## 11. Numerical elements

The fact that there are *three* caskets and *three* suitors introduces another fairy-tale like element in the play is the repeated use of the magical number three and its multiples. The number occurs so often in the play that its use cannot be coincidental. Solanio and Salerio set the scene at the very beginning by suggesting *three* reasons for Antonio's melancholy (I i 8-9, 46, 47). Portia receives *six* suitors whom we do not see and *three* whom we do, making the magical *three* times *three*, *nine*. Antonio borrows *three* thousand ducats for *three* months (I iii 1-10, 60-62) and Antonio expects '*thrice three* times the value' of the bond before it is due (I iii 154). Shylock, in his justification of taking interest, refers to Jacob as 'The *third* possessor' (I iii 69). Portia has *three* main suitors who have to choose between *three* caskets. Morocco boast of winning *three* battles ('fields' II i 26). Launcelot refers to 'the Sisters *Three*' (II ii 57) and later in the same scene when he retails his fortune, all but one of the numbers mentioned ('aleven') are multiples of three; '*fifteen* wives', '*Nine* maids' and 'drowning *thrice*' (II ii 143-153). Antonio stops the masque at *nine* o'clock (II vi 63) and Solanio, describing the entrance of Tubal says 'a *third* cannot be match'd' (III i 66-67). Bassanio refers to Portia as '*thrice*-fair lady' (III ii 146) and Portia would be '*trebled* twenty times' herself (III ii 153). She goes on to multiply the debt owed to Shylock:

Portia: What sum owes he the Jew?

Bassanio: For me, *three* thousand ducats.

Portia: What! no more?

Pay him *six* thousand, and deface the bond:

*Double six* thousand, and then *treble* that ...

(III ii 299-302) (my italics)

and during Act IV the amount changes in a crescendo-decrescendo movement: Shylock states his unwillingness to accept the money - *three* thousand ducats (IV i 42), Bassanio offers *six* thousand (IV i 84), which Shylock refuses even:

If every ducat in *six* thousand ducats

Were in *six* parts, and every part a ducat ...

(IV i 85-86) (my italics)

Portia offers Shylock *thrice* the money (IV i 222, 229) which Shylock rejects until he sees the tables turning on him. He then accepts 'the bond *thrice*' (IV i 313) but Portia stops him, and again when he asks for the principal (IV i 331). At the end of the scene Bassanio offers the 'doctor' the *three* thousand ducats of the bond as a fee (IV i 406). Bassanio explains this to Portia in the final act (V i 210-211) and finally Portia



17. Jan Gossaert (called Mabuse), *The Adoration of the Magi* (c1506)  
Wood, 177,2 x 161,3 cm, The National Gallery, London

tells Antonio that *three* of his argosies have safely reached port (V i 276). In addition there are the *three* sets of lovers, three contracts or bonds (Antonio's with Shylock, Bassanio's with Portia and Portia's with Bassanio, assured by Antonio), and three exchanges of the ring (Portia to Bassanio, Bassanio to Balthasar/Portia, Portia to Bassanio).

The number three has a strong symbolic significance. According to J. E. Cirlot, it is associated with the Trinity, and is the element which keeps the opposing forces of dualism in balance which

prevents the two opposing terms from cancelling each other out, forcing both these force-principles to yield, that is, to function alternately and not simultaneously ...

... As Jung has observed, Plotinus with his characteristic combination of philosophical precision and poetic allusiveness compared Oneness (the creative principle) with light, intellect with the sun, and the world-soul with the moon. Unity is split internally into three 'moments' - the active, the passive and the union or outcome of these two ... As Lao-Tse says: 'One engenders two, two engenders three, three engenders all things'. Hence three has the power to resolve the conflict posed by dualism; it is also the harmonic resolution of the impact of unity upon duality. It symbolizes the creation of spirit out of matter, of the active out of the passive.<sup>53</sup>

In relation to this, man was believed to be composed of three essences; spirit, soul and body which corresponded to mind, sentiments and instincts. The anatomists believed that man was animated by three kinds of spirits; the natural, which arose in the liver; the vital, which were refined from natural spirits by the heart; and the animal, which were refined from vital spirits by the brain.<sup>54</sup> Hence the number three was related to man and his relationship to the universe, the microcosm and the macrocosm. It also carried the idea of balance and reconciliation between two opposing and apparently irreconcilable antagonists, and in this connection is highly appropriate in a play which is about two different worlds and the results when they clash.

The numerical significance of the three caskets is reminiscent of the three presents which the Magi offer to the Christ-child in paintings of the Adoration of the Magi, a good example of which is Jan Gossaert's *Adoration of the Magi* of c1506.<sup>55</sup> [Illustration 17] These are portrayed as the highly ornate, shrine-like caskets which Morocco implies in his reference to Portia herself as a shrine. It may also be worth bearing in mind that pictorial tradition shows two white and one black Magi, who bear gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. By tradition it is the coloured king, Balthasar, who carries the gift of myrrh, which was a perfume used in



the preparation and embalming of the dead. The traditional carol sums it up:

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume  
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb;<sup>56</sup>

Morocco chooses the gold casket, but finds inside the appurtenances of death. The name may have stuck in Shakespeare's mind to re-emerge as Portia's alter-ego.<sup>57</sup> The three gifts of the Magi were also related symbolically to the spirit, soul and body of man, and also to Christ's royalty (gold), divinity (frankincense) and humanity (myrrh).<sup>58</sup> In a reversal of these elements, Portia's royal suitor, Morocco, chooses the gold casket, and yet finds that he had actually selected death, symbolised by the skull and myrrh, while Bassanio reveals his humanity in his humility in choosing the lead casket, and achieves the golden prize.

## 12. To hazard all

According to the lead casket, Bassanio 'must give and hazard all he hath' to win his prize, but it has been argued that Bassanio is not, in fact, the one who does this, but Antonio, who risks his life by pledging it for Bassanio's loan. What is forgotten is that Antonio cannot take seriously the bond, believing that he will be able to more than repay it before it becomes forfeit. He therefore does not *deliberately* hazard both his wealth and his life. When the unimaginable happens, and the bond becomes forfeit, he is prepared to give his life for his friend, but this was not in his mind when the bond was originally proposed. Bassanio, on the other hand, deliberately hazards not only the money he has already borrowed, thus plunging himself even deeper in debt, but risks the only way open to him of recouping his losses, a wealthy marriage, because he must swear never 'To woo a maid in way of marriage' (II ix 13) if he fails. Morocco and Arragon also make this commitment, but as they appear wealthy in their own right, a healthy dowry is not essential to their continued existence.

The pledge, however, has much farther reaching consequences than acquiring wealth, and Bassanio is not only risking his present condition and prosperity, but also his future immortality in the form of children. The importance of progeny in the marriage is pointed out by the exchange between Nerissa and Gratiano in their proposed bet with Portia and Bassanio for the first child, and Shakespeare lays emphasis on the importance of leaving a copy of oneself for posterity in several sonnets,

particularly Sonnet 3, and in Sonnet 6 he presents the production of a family as a way of cheating death. The idea can also be seen in *Twelfth Night* where Viola, wooing Olivia on behalf of her master Orsino, makes the same point:

Lady, you are the cruell'st she alive,  
If you will lead these graces to the grave,  
And leave the world no copy. (Twelfth Night I v 225-227)

Thus the gold casket, with its bones, becomes symbolic of the choice to lead a barren life, both by choosing the delusive charms of the gold itself, and by *failing* to choose the right casket and so condemning oneself to a childless, barren existence. The choice of the wrong casket becomes an active decision, not merely a mis-choice; a deliberate (if subconscious) choice of the wrong, unproductive, self-centred path which leads to death and destruction.

### Chapter 3

#### THE RINGS: LOVE AND MARRIAGE

##### 1. The ring

There has been a tendency amongst both critics and producers to regard the whole of the last act of *The Merchant of Venice*, with its episode of the rings, as a serious anticlimax after the high drama of the court scene, and in its descent into domesticity, an embarrassment. From the time of the re-opening of the theatres to the first half of the twentieth century, in performance Shylock became the dominant character, as can be seen from the popularity of George Granville's adaptation *The Jew of Venice*, first performed in 1701.<sup>1</sup> Shylock gained extra scenes and the final act was omitted altogether during the nineteenth century, when the play ended with the trial scene.<sup>2</sup> However, the fact remains that Shakespeare did write the last act of *The Merchant of Venice* and therefore intended it to function as an important element. The problem is *what?*

##### 1.a. as proof of identity

On a purely narrative basis, the last act of *The Merchant of Venice* serves to tie up the loose ends, providing a final summing up in which actions, together with their consequences, are explained and identities revealed. To cut the play off immediately after the trial scene is to leave Portia and Nerissa in their male disguises, and their husbands none the wiser. In addition Jessica and Lorenzo are left battenning on Portia's hospitality, and Antonio is left, bereft of his ships, and in an equivocal position with regard to the Portia/Bassanio/Antonio triangle. Although Shakespeare does conveniently remove certain characters which have no further place in the action (e.g. The Fool in *King Lear*, Old Adam in *As You Like It* and the Sea Captain in *Twelfth Night*, whose existence is only remembered when he is needed to restore Viola's female apparel), he does not leave his audience with such a lack of information as this. The last act is necessary to expose the identity of the two lawyers to their husbands and the rings provide a way for Portia to uncover how clever she has been without actually boasting. No doubt the ever fertile brain of the author could have dreamed up other ways of discovery, but the rings provide a neat, economical way of rounding everything up. Without the rings Portia would have been obliged to reveal directly to Bassanio her part in the trial; Bassanio, with the usual blindness of Shakespeare's men to disguise, would never have guessed by himself, and the fact that Portia has the ring is

proof that she and the lawyer are one and the same. Elsewhere Shakespeare uses rings as unassailable proof of identity. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona* Julia is identified by her ring and Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* is given a ring by the King to be used if she is in need, and which furnishes proof of her dealings with the unknowing Bertram.

1.b. as proof of validity

The rings, however, have a more complex function. The symbol of the ring is a very powerful one and dates back into antiquity. At an early period when reading and writing were less common, rings engraved with a badge or sign were worn and used as a seal to provide proof of authenticity to letters and other documents.<sup>3</sup> This was extended to a proof of delegated authority when a king would hand over his signet ring to a subordinate in order to verify his full royal approval of commands made by the official (for instance Genesis, 41. 42; Esther, 8. 2), and in addition assured identity and made forgery of documents and letters less easy. By the Middle Ages the signet ring had assumed importance in legal, commercial and private matters. In mercantile circles the seal ring (engraved with a badge or trademark) was used not only as a seal but, sent by a bearer, to prove the genuineness of a bill of demand.<sup>4</sup> and it is a fact that certain documents up to the present day have little validity in law unless they are signed and sealed.

Malvolio, in *Twelfth Night*, accepts the validity of the counterfeit letter not only because he thinks he recognises the writing, but because it has 'the impressure her Lucrece with which she uses to seal' (II v 86) i.e. Olivia's signet ring with an image of Lucretia engraved on the bezel. In *Richard II* York uses his ring as authority to ask his sister Gloucester for £1,000 (II ii 92) and in *Henry VIII* Cranmer produces the ring given to him by Henry to be used if he is accused and his entreaties prove ineffectual. On the production of the ring, his judges' attitude immediately changes (V i, 150 and V iii 99ff). In *Measure for Measure* the Duke produces his 'hand and seal' (IV ii 185) as his authority to speak for the Duke, but this is a letter and it is difficult to tell whether it contains the seal-ring itself, or only its impress.

## 1.c. as love token

The rings in *The Merchant of Venice* are, however, more than simple proof of identity. They are symbols of love and marriage. The ring Nerissa gives Gratiano is clearly a posy or 'poesy' ring:

... a hoop of gold, a paltry ring  
That she did give me, whose posy was  
For all the world like cutler's poetry  
Upon a knife, "Love me, and leave me not."

(V i 147-150)

and such love tokens date back to very early times (there are Greek and Roman examples) although the term itself does not occur earlier than the sixteenth century. These were hoops of gold engraved with a motto, usually lover-like but occasionally satiric. William Jones, in his book *Finger-Ring Lore*, which was published in 1877, gives numerous examples of these.<sup>5</sup> Up to the seventeenth century these rings were engraved on the outside,<sup>6</sup> and about the same time the use of rings set with gems for marriage/betrothal was abandoned in favour of a plainer style. The use of rings set with precious stones for wedding rings is evidenced by Peacham's emblem *Una dolo Divûm* [Illustration 18]:

And ye great Ladie, that are left alone,  
To merc'les mercie, of the worldes wide sea,  
Behold your faire, though counterfeited stone,  
So much you lo'd in, on your wedding day,  
And tooke for true, how after it did proove,  
Unworthy Iewell, of so worthy love.

Ah how can man, your sexe (faire Ladies) blame,  
Whose breasts, are vertues pretious Carcanets,  
When he himselfe, first breakes the boundes of shame,  
And dearest love, and loialtie forgets:  
Yet heerein happie, ye above the rest,  
Belov'd of Heaven, and in your children blest.<sup>7</sup>

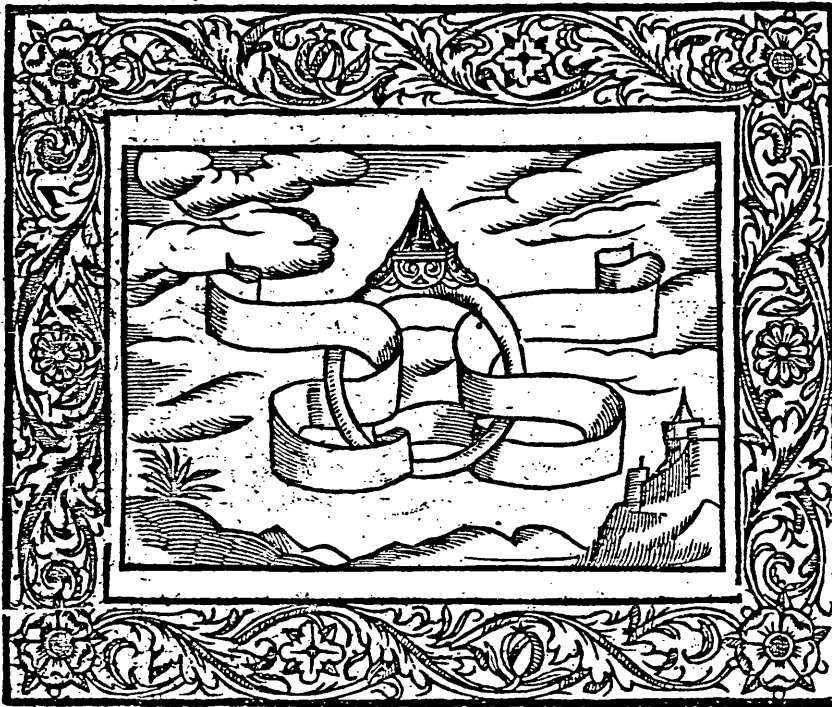
In this case the wedding has proved to be not ideal, and the falsity of the marriage is imposed on the ring itself. While Portia is not in the unhappy position of the lady in Peacham's verse, she is in danger of being forgotten by Bassanio in his divided loyalties. The threat of losing her because he 'lost' her ring brings him to his senses. A ring with a counterfeit stone is used in another story to convey the message that true love should not be forgotten. Samuel Daniel, in his translation of Paulus Iovius, includes some gleanings of his own, one of which retails the story of a young woman who was abandoned by her lover, a young gallant of Salernia, in favour of a younger girl. She concealed her hurt, but resolved to let him know covertly how she felt, so:

she caused a false Diamant, to be so cunningly set in Gold, that it would easely have deceived any man save onely the expert artificer,

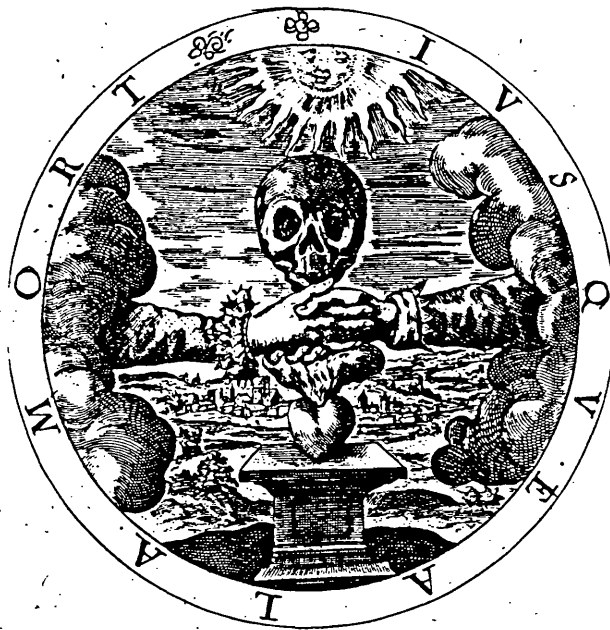
87

*Vna dolo Divūm.*

*To the most Honorable and worthie Ladie the Ladie Alicia D.*



18. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna, or a garden of heroical Devises* (London, 1612)  
'Una dolo Divūm', p.87



19. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635)  
'Jusque a la mort', Book 2, Emblem XXXVII, p.99

and within the ring next unto the finger, she had made to be engraven this mot in *Ebrewe: Lamazabatani*.

The ring was duly sent, but the young man, despite a knowledge of Hebrew, failed to understand the message until he took it to a goldsmith who told him that the diamond was a counterfeit. At this he realised what injury he had done her 'resolving into two words the mot of the false Diamant in this sort: *Diamante false*, and taking pity on her, he returned and they were reunited and continued to love each other for a long time.'<sup>9</sup>

#### 1.d. as pledge of marriage

The ring's association with the marriage ceremony is an old one. The Romans gave a ring to mark betrothal and it constituted a pledge that the contract would be fulfilled. Ecclesiastic sanction and benediction formulae exist from the eleventh century,<sup>9</sup> and in the twelfth century this sacred element was increased when the ring was used in connection with mystical marriages.<sup>10</sup> Due to the authority of the ring's use in commercial and legal dealings, when included as a part of the marriage ceremony it assumed a solemn and binding significance, but apart from the contractual obligations associated with it, the ring also came to symbolise the exchange of love. This can be found exemplified in the emblem writers, as in Wither's emblem *Death is unable to divide Their Hearts whose Hands True love hath tyde* which is illustrated by two hands clasped above a smoking heart on an altar [Illustration 19]. A skull also forms part of the emblem. Wither explains that the emblem represents the idea that when two people are joined in true love, Death cannot separate them:

They then have entred that strict *Obligation*,  
By which they, firmly, ev'ry way are ty'd;  
And, without meanes (or thought of separation)  
Should in that *Union*, till their *Deaths*, abide;  
This, therefore, minde thou, whatsoere thou be  
(Whose *Marriage ring*, this *Covenant*, hath sealed)  
For, though, thy Faith's infringement, none can see,  
Thy secret fault, shall one day, be revealed ...'<sup>11</sup>

The italics are as printed in the original, but they highlight words which I would have emphasised in connection with *The Merchant of Venice*. Hearts play a significant role in *The Merchant of Venice*, both in the romantic sense of lovers joining and in the literal sense of an organ of the body. 'Death' is present in the threat to Antonio, but he is saved, so that his demise cannot break apart the lovers. The 'obligation' is reflected both in Shylock's bond, and in the contract between Portia and Bassanio. Three couples join in 'union' under the 'covenant' of marriage, and for all three a ring forms part of the agreement.

Although modern custom makes the giving of an engagement ring from the man to the woman more common than the other way around, it is clear that Portia's ring is a betrothal ring, and although one critic has pointed out that the custom of the bride giving a ring to her husband is a relatively new one,<sup>12</sup> this ignores the evidence of the Lutherans who, while not insisting on a ring, preferred the already established German custom of an exchange of rings,<sup>13</sup> nor does it show awareness of the numerous examples in Shakespeare's plays. In *Twelfth Night* Sebastian and Olivia are joined together by a priest, the marriage being confirmed

... by mutual joinder of your hands,  
Attested by the holy close of lips,  
*Strengthened by interchangement of your rings,*  
And all the ceremony of this compact  
Seal'd in my function, by my testimony. (V i 151-155) (my italics)

Thomas Comber verifies that the wedding ring has a religious as well as a secular symbolism in his treatise on *The Occasional office of Matrimony*:

To that which the Ring signifies by the positive Institution of the Church, viz "To be a token and pledge of the Covenant made betwixt them, as is manifest from the words spoken at the delivery thereof, and from the Prayer following"<sup>14</sup>

Jan Baptist Bedaux says, however, that it was common for the bride's father to give the bridegroom a ring as guarantee and part-payment of the dowry<sup>15</sup> and Comber refers to this also as:

the money in bargains given as Earnest or pledge: of the same Nature is the Ring in Marriage, viz a visible and remanent token of a solemn Covenant, which whensoever they look upon it, it ought to mind them of Promises and Vows they have made to each other, and to admonish them carefully to perform the same.<sup>16</sup>

The acceptance of the ring formed a binding pledge, and by accepting Portia's ring, Bassanio is accepting all that it represents as a legal contract. Portia's father, being dead, cannot hand over the ring in person to Bassanio as guarantee of her dowry, but by correctly passing the casket test, Bassanio has established his right to claim Portia according to her father's demands, and so Portia acts as proxy to her father in handing over the ring. The legality of this exchange has been minimised in the twentieth century when engagements can easily be broken and divorce is a common event, but it is important to realise that in the sixteenth century marriage was a more serious *business* in the commercial sense of the word, and one in which financial considerations played a large part. Laurence Stone says:



For persons of property it involved a series of distinct steps. The first was a written legal contract between the parents concerning financial arrangements. The second was the spousals (also called a contract), the formal exchange, usually before witnesses, of oral promises. The third step was the public proclamation of banns in church, three times, the purpose of which was to allow claims of pre-contract to be heard ... The fourth step was the wedding in church, in which mutual consent was publicly verified, and the union received the formal blessing of the Church. The fifth and final step was the sexual consummation.

*But it cannot be emphasized too strongly that according to ecclesiastical law the spousals was as legally binding a contract as the church wedding, although to many laity it was no more than a conditional contract. Any sort of exchange of promises before witnesses which was followed by cohabitation was regarded in law as a valid marriage.'*<sup>17</sup> (my italics)

There was confusion during the sixteenth century because, although

In the Church's view, full consummation of a marriage was not permissible until after solemnisation in church, preceded by triple banns to ensure adequate publicity for the couple's intentions ... lay opinion refused to accept that unsolemnised marriages should be considered void ... The essential criterion adopted for judging the validity of marriages was therefore the open and free expression of consent by both parties, before at least two witnesses, whether it took place in a priest's presence or not.<sup>18</sup>

Thus a couple could be legally bound together in marriage even though the Church regarded their union as irregular. This position was not rectified until Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753.<sup>19</sup>

Although the contractual words were usually spoken at a public banquet or in the presence of a priest they could 'equally well' be spoken in the presence of friends and workmates of the parties, summoned at short notice,<sup>20</sup> and the fact that Bassanio and Portia exchange their pledges in the presence of at least two witnesses, Nerissa and Gratiano, establishes the legality of their bond. There were basically two forms of spousals. Stone describes them:

Spousals could take two forms, one of which was the contract *per verba de futuro*, an oral promise to marry in the future. If not followed by consummation (which was assumed to imply consent in the present), this was an engagement which could be legally broken by mutual consent at a later date. If followed by consummation, however, it was legally binding for life. The contract *per verba de praesenti*, however, by which the pair exchanged before witnesses such phrases as 'I do take thee to my wife' and 'I do take thee to my husband', was regarded in ecclesiastical law as an irrevocable commitment which could never be broken, and which nullified a later church wedding to someone else.<sup>21</sup>

In *Two Gentlemen of Verona* Shakespeare shows a betrothal which is deliberately vague in its legal aspects. Proteus and Julia exchange rings and 'seal the bargain with a holy kiss' (II ii 7) but marriage is not mentioned, and the exchange is performed without witnesses, thus the spousal is not legally valid, although the audience is left with the impression of a formal betrothal. This may be because the audience constitute the witnesses. However, in *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare is dealing with the hard and fast legality of marriage spousals, and it is clear from the various types of betrothal in the play that he was aware of the complexities of these kinds of contract. Angelo had a *sponsalia per verba de futuro* with Mariana but when she lost her brother and with him her dowry, Angelo was within his rights to call off the contract. By having sexual intercourse with her, even though he believed her to be another woman, he changed the nature of the contract and by consummating it, indicated his acceptance of her as a wife regardless of dowry. The consummation, therefore, becomes in effect the marriage itself. Henry Swinburne in *A Treatise of Spousals* published in 1686 but written about a hundred years before, expressed the common-law view of the time:

if a Man contract Spousals conditionally with a Woman, these are uncertain Spousals ... and yet nevertheless, if in the mean time he have access to her, as to his Wife, these doubtful Spousals do thereby pass into Matrimony.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Angelo, who abandons his betrothed when she loses her portion, Claudio is very willing to regularise his relationship with Julietta. He regards himself as already married, postponing the consecration only until her 'friends'<sup>23</sup> hand over the dowry:

... upon a true contract  
I got possession of Julietta's bed.  
You know the lady she is fast my wife,  
Save that we do the denunciation lack  
Of outward order; this we came not to,  
Only for propagation of a dow'r  
Remaining in the coffer of her friends (I ii 138-144) (my italics)

The consummation of a marriage or a betrothal is therefore an important element in the legality of the marriage, and the marriage of Portia and Bassanio is interrupted before the finalization of consummation. Gratiano's bawdy quip at the end of the play is more than just a joke. E. A. M. Colman in *The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare* comments that:

The bawdy content of *The Merchant* culminates in the last two hundred lines of the play, where the squabble over the rings admits a series of *double entendres*. This maintains the general tendency of Act V as a whole: whatever unease we have felt over the Christians' final treatment of Shylock, Shakespeare is making sure that the play will at least end as 'Happy Comedy'.<sup>24</sup>

That the episode with the rings does this cannot be contradicted, but Colman ignores the more serious side of the sexual fulfilment of the marriages. The deliberate movement of the last Act from a poetic dreamlike quality to the most down to earth aspects of life is more than simply making a 'happy ending'. The threats of Portia and Nerissa to take another man into their bed would cancel the existing betrothals (which have not been consummated) and although the audience is aware that their threats are empty, Bassanio and Gratiano cannot know that. The women's actions show their determination to treat their husbands as the men have treated their wives. While Bassanio and Gratiano may worry about the threatened cuckolding, Portia and Nerissa are aware that the doctor and clerk whom they promise to take to their beds have the same reality as the doctor and clerk that Bassanio and Gratiano swear are the recipients of the rings. They both are and are not, occupying the same non-existent space because although real to Bassanio and Gratiano, they are the fictional inventions of Portia and Nerissa.

## 2. Love matches and arranged marriages

The last act shows a cross section of married life from the parental rebellion of Jessica and her elopement with Lorenzo to the parental obedience of Portia and her approved betrothal to Bassanio; from poetic romanticism to the realistic war of the sexes, with its emphasis on both the physical aspects of marriage and the equality of wit, and culminates in the final balance of physical and spiritual which marks the ending happily with general reconciliation. The consummation is not only sexual but emotional, and this unity can be symbolised by the circular wedding ring. As popular superstition stated:

The form of the Ring, being circular, that is, round, and without end, importeth thus much, that their mutual love and hearty affection should roundly flow from the one to the other, as in a Circle, and that continually, and for ever.<sup>25</sup>

In *The Merchant of Venice*, although the conventional marriage arrangements between the partners' families which form part of the background situation in *Measure for Measure* are missing, the contract is a firmer bond than the one in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Portia makes her contract with Bassanio and seals it with the gift of the ring. She addresses him as her Lord and he accepts the ring and her love, thus their exchange is a mutual acceptance of each other and, being in front of witnesses, comprises a legal and binding spousal *per verba de praesenti*. Her father is dead, but

he is still a presence in the play due to his engineering of the casket test. Stone points out that marriages were generally arranged by parents:

Almost all children until the end of the sixteenth century were so conditioned by their upbringing and so financially helpless that they acquiesced without much objection in the matches contrived for them by their parents. The moral justification for parental control was derived ... from the social values of the society and from the Fifth Commandment. 'Honour thy father and mother' was a sacred precept reiterated by both Protestant preachers and state propagandists, and interpreted to mean strict obedience.<sup>26</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to suppose that love played no part in an arranged match. Due to the near impossibility of obtaining a divorce, it was realised that some mutual affection was a desirable qualification, but as it was widely believed, especially among the upper classes, that this could develop within a marriage if the partners were well enough matched, a strong prior attachment was not thought necessary between the proposed couple. Obedience to parents could mean a marriage in which the desired mutual affection failed to develop; Parents did increasingly over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries try to take account of their children's wishes but a large number of marriages inevitably went wrong. Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* expresses an attitude towards arranged marriages which falls somewhere between the filial obedience of Portia and the rebellion of Jessica, and has a decidedly advanced ring to it:

Yes, faith; it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy, and say 'Father, as it please you'. But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy and say 'Father, as it please me'.  
(II i 43-47)

G. R. Hibbard says:

I should dearly like to know how the original audience for the play, somewhere about the year 1598, responded to that sally, which must have been at least as delightfully shocking then as Liza Doolittle's "Not bloody likely" would be some three hundred years later.<sup>27</sup>

It seems that very few upper class daughters disobeyed their parents in the question of marriage during the sixteenth century and it was generally considered to be the parents' duty and natural desire to further their children's advancement in life: 'Parental love was held to be much stronger than filial, and reluctance to help parents in old age was allegedly widespread'.<sup>28</sup> Shakespeare shows this attitude most clearly in *King Lear*.

Portia's father does the best he can to arrange a suitable match which he knows he will not live to supervise. By making conditions on her hand, he restricts her suitors to wealthy and determined men, and by the nature of

the test itself ensures that only one who has the sensitivity and perception to see beneath the outer appearance will win her. His aim is to arrange a match which is not based on passionate love, which was considered by nearly all authorities to be a passing madness, but on mutual suitability, believing that from that mutual respect, love or at least affection will grow. This is the conventional parental attitude of the time. Shakespeare stays within this framework in the Portia/Bassanio relationship, but overlays it with romantic love. Portia is willing to obey her father's wishes, and is contrasted with Jessica, who goes directly against her father. However, Jessica is at a disadvantage in that Shylock shows no intention of arranging a match for her. It is notable that Shylock, in keeping his daughter at home, is neglecting the accepted parental duty of finding a husband for her. Jessica is not in the position of an Anne Page, a Hermia, a Silvia or a Juliet in having an unwanted suitor pressed on her by her father. Shylock, selfishly, wants to keep Jessica shut up in his house, regarding her as his property. This is underlined by his reaction when she elopes in his confusion of her with his money.

While Portia has a father who, although now dead, has made arrangements in his will for a suitable match for his daughter, and Jessica has a father who, in contrast, makes no attempt to see his daughter fittingly married, Bassanio has no father evident in the play at all, who can arrange a suitable bride for him. That he makes a good choice in spite of his youth and the love which has kindled in him at the sight of Portia, both of which, for Elizabethan traditionalists would have condemned him as being incapable of making a balanced judgement, is reflected in his mature appraisal of the caskets.

### 3. **Marriage and money**

Bassanio has been accused by some critics of being entirely mercenary in his pursuit of Portia.<sup>29</sup> If Stone is to be believed:

A pragmatic calculation of family interest was the accepted viewpoint of the sixteenth century, and the one upon which the approach to marriage in real life was normally based. The elite, however, were also subjected by the poets and playwrights to propaganda for an entirely antithetical ideal of romantic love, as expressed for example in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and plays. Until romanticism temporarily triumphed in the late eighteenth century, there was thus a clear conflict of values between the idealization of love by some poets, playwrights and the authors of romances on the one hand, and its rejection as a form of imprudent folly and



20. Petrus Christus, *St. Eligius weighing the Wedding Rings of a Betrothed Couple* (1449)  
Lehman Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art



21. Joos van Cleve, *Pair portraits of a couple* (c1530)  
41 x 33 cm each, Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio





a. *Portrait of a Woman* (1529)  
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



22. Maerten van Heemskerck

b. *Portrait of a Man* (1529)  
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

even madness by all theologians, moralists, authors of manuals of conduct, and parents and adults in general. Everyone knew about it, some experienced it, but only a minority of young courtiers made it a way of life, and even they did not necessarily regard it as a suitable basis for life-long marriage.<sup>30</sup>

This is probably taking the anti-romanticism view too far, but there is no doubt that financial considerations played a large part in marriage. Evidence of the links between gold and marriage can be seen in many Renaissance portraits. As early as 1449 Petrus Christus was commissioned by the goldsmith's guild of Antwerp to paint St. Eligius weighing the wedding rings of a betrothed couple.<sup>31</sup> [Illustration 20] Portraits reveal the important relationship between marriage and money. A pair portrait by Joos van Cleve shows a husband counting money while his wife holds a wedding ring [Illustration 21] and the pair portraits of an unknown couple by Maerten van Heemskerck [Illustration 22] show the wife engaged in the domestic action of spinning while her husband deals with the financial side of the marriage, counting coins and bookkeeping. The gold being counted may therefore have a symbolic marital meaning referring to the status of each partner and also to the virtue of prudence.<sup>32</sup> In addition, portraits were used as a kind of advertising; a grease to the wheels of financial and political marriage propositions. As Roy Strong remarks:

Portraiture was symbol and allegory, but portraiture was also likeness. In an age before photography it served a factual purpose of direct reportage and the diplomacy of the period is littered with references to portraits coming and going to abet marriage transactions.<sup>33</sup>

One has only to think of Holbein's well-intentioned but ill-fated portrait of Anne of Cleves.<sup>34</sup>

As the somewhat extreme example of Henry VIII shows, the commercial and status concerns in the arrangement of a marriage were not always only on the part of the parents: Ralph A. Houlbrooke comments

Men sometimes deliberately sought wives whose dowries would enable them to discharge debts or mortgages. The prominence of financial criteria, then, was certainly not due only to the arrangement of marriages by parents and kinsfolk; suitors were often keener than their elders in their pursuit of fortunes. Criticisms of the 'mercenary' character of early modern marriage are largely misconceived. Marriage was one of the chief means of securing that 'livelihood' upon whose possession individual and family security and independence chiefly rested before the advent of large-scale salaried employment, insurance or the Welfare State.<sup>35</sup>

The sole pursuit of material gain, however, was not thought to be a sufficient reason and was 'condemned by moralists and a perennial subject



of contemporary satire.<sup>36</sup> Whitney expresses this in the emblem *Impar coniugium*. After describing the tyrant Menzentius who bound together couples, one dead and one alive he likens this to unequal marriage:

Those wedding webbes, which some doe weave with ruthe,  
As when the one, with straunge disease doth pine:  
Or when as age, bee coupled unto youthe,  
And those that hate, inforced are to ioyne,  
This representes: and doth those parentes showe,  
Are tyrauntes meere, who ioyne their children soe.

Yet manie are, who not the cause regarde,  
The birthe, the yeares, nor vertues of the minde:  
For goulde is first, with greedie men prefer'de,  
And love is laste, and likinge set behinde:  
But parentes harde, that matches make for goodes:  
Can not be free, from guilte of childrens bloodes.<sup>37</sup>

Alciati also expresses concern for equality in marriage, but in his case the concern is for equality in health. His emblem *Nupta contagioso* refers to a woman married to a syphilitic.<sup>38</sup> Both mention Menzentius, but Whitney's adaptation of Alciati's original warning indicates that Elizabethan England was more concerned with social position, wealth and age as necessary equalities in marriage, rather than health. Once these had been established, personality could be taken into account:

Birth and property were important qualifications, but, these provided, what recommended each of these matches was personal character.<sup>39</sup>

Portia qualifies as a desirable marriage prospect financially, and she is of good birth, but to Bassanio, these things, although important, are of less worth than her character. In describing her to Antonio he takes into account wealth and beauty but leaves until last what he sees as her most admirable qualities

In Belmont is a lady *richly* left,  
And she is *fair* and, *fairer than that word*,  
Of wondrous *virtues* (I i 161-163) (my italics)

As with his choice of casket, he has not been influenced by the externals of the situation. Portia is rich, like the gold casket, and fair, as is the silver, but her real worth is in her superficially invisible virtues, as her picture is enclosed in the outwardly unspectacular lead casket. Portia is not only beautiful, she is good as well, and such a relationship between appearance and reality is symbolised by a ring of gold set with a precious stone. The emblem appears in Corrozet's *Hectomgraphie* with the motto *Beauty the companion of goodness* the accompanying French verse of which reads:

Comme la pierre precieuse  
Est à l'anneau d'or bien conioincte,  
Ainsi la beaulté gracieuse  
Doibt estre avecq la bonté ioincte.<sup>40</sup>

Portia's dowry is the wealth of her father, and the ring can be regarded as a pledge to honour the marriage contract and provide the dowry. As a precious object in its own right, it symbolises the total amount of the dowry, which it would be impractical to hand over literally. By representing the dowry with a ring, the whole wealth of the bride can be transferred conveniently. However, the ring is a symbol not only of the wealth that Bassanio is marrying but his right to use that wealth and Portia herself as he chooses. It is significant that Bassanio appears to be fatherless as do so many of Shakespeare's other main male characters. Not only does he have to make his choice of bride unaided by a maturer head (although Shakespeare often shows that such 'greybeards' are not, after all, reliable in their judgement), and therefore the worthiness of his choice reflects back on himself, but a practical reason for his fatherlessness emerges when it is realised that the groom's father took possession of the dowry.<sup>41</sup> In Elizabethan life the father of the prospective husband was encouraged to arrange a wealthy match for his son for his own financial benefit. This is implied in the emblem quoted from Whitney above. Shakespeare gets over this possible complication by making Bassanio a free agent, so that he has full control of Portia's fortune when he offers to buy back Antonio's bond from Shylock.

#### 4. The symbolic significance of the ring as an object

##### 4.a. Turquoise

That Shylock had at one time experienced some family feeling can be seen in his reaction to Jessica's treatment of his turquoise, given to him by his wife, Leah.<sup>42</sup> This may have been a betrothal ring as she gave it to him when he 'was a bachelor', for the Jews also used a marriage or betrothal ring, and sixteenth and seventeenth century examples exist of the large, elaborate rings which had, in place of the bezel a model in gold or other metal of a building with high gables and often a moveable weathercock. This represented the temple of Jerusalem and was worn only for the ceremony.<sup>43</sup> In the case of a turquoise ring, the stone would have been regarded as valuable not so much for its intrinsic value as for its magical and talismanic powers. It was supposed to move when the wearer was in danger, reflect the health of the wearer by turning pale

when he or she was ill and was given, particularly in Germany, as a love token because the permanence of its colour was believed to indicate the constancy of the donor's devotion. Significantly, it was believed 'to take away all enmity and to reconcile man and wife'.<sup>44</sup> Franciscus Rueus, in his treatise *De Gemmis aliquot iis praesertim quarum divus loannes Apostolus in sua Apocalypsi meminit*<sup>45</sup> agrees that the turquoise has magical powers:

I find too that this gem is potent against injuries from enemies and against sloth, sharpens one's natural talent, and conciliates married pairs.<sup>46</sup>

While the acquisition of Shylock's turquoise by Jessica and Lorenzo helps their bonding together, its loss by Shylock heralds his ultimate downfall. From this point onwards his natural wiliness and cunning are no longer sufficient protection against those who oppose him, and are overlaid and weakened by his increasing obsession with revenge. The loss of his ring reflects the loss of his reason. His last tie with love and family affection is broken and he puts behind him whatever gentle influence and restraint his late wife may have exerted on him. His pathetic and rather wistful words, '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' (III i 110-113) indicate that he held his wife in some respect and tenderness, and the use of the word 'wilderness' evokes a feeling of desolation, both at the loss of the ring, and the loss of his wife. Jessica takes from her father more than just valuables; she removes the last link between him and familial affection, and in doing so destroys that last remnant of compassion in him, releasing his natural enmity from any bonds, and, free of any constraint, he unleashes a flood of hate and rage on the Christian community who have stolen not only his goods, and he would include his daughter in his possessions, but his memories as well.

#### 4.b. Gold

The material of the wedding ring, gold, had symbolic qualities, as Comber points out:

As to the matter of it, which is Gold, the purest and noblest of all metals, and which endures the longest uncorrupted, to intimate the generous, sincere, and durable affection which ought to be between the Married Person.<sup>47</sup>

The rings tie Venice and Belmont together because they are made of the stuff of both, gold. Venice is built on the gold of a mercantile empire, and the unhealthy preoccupation with the getting of wealth is seen in Shylock. The gold of Belmont has a different nature representing the purity of love and fidelity.<sup>48</sup> Both worlds have reflections in each other,

*Amor coniugalis aeternus.*

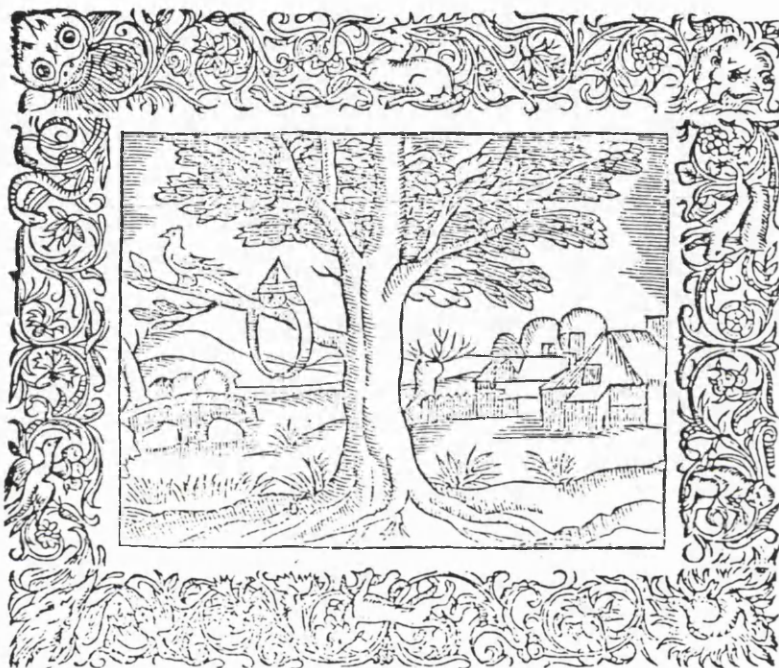
92

To my Loving and most kind frendes, Mr Christopher Collarde, and  
Mrs Mabel Collarde his wife, of St Martines in the scildes.

Mabella Colarde.

*Bella, alma corde.*

Anagramma Au-  
thent.



**D**EAREST of frendes, accept this small device,  
Wherewith I would your courtesies requite,  
But that your lones invaluable price,  
Must hold me debter, while I view this light,  
Nor can my heires, these papers dead and gone,  
Repay the favors for me, you have done.

A \* Turtle heere, ypon an Olive fits,  
Ypon whose branch, depends a Ring of gold,  
As best the loue of Matrimonic fits,  
Thus ever endles, never waxing old,  
The branch and bowes, the fruite that from you spring,  
The Doue your selfe, your wife that golden KING.

O 2.

*Temperantia*

\* Exemplo lunc-  
ta tibi sunt in a-  
more Columba  
Proprietat: 2. 15.

Aurum rubigine  
non corrumpitur  
quod etiam in maxi-  
mo pretio temper  
habebatur.

however. Belmont shows awareness that gold can inspire avarice in the appearance of the gold casket, while Venice reveals that in some circumstances other goals are more desirable than financial reward. The tensions between generosity and commerce will be discussed more fully in section 9 of Chapter 5 below.

#### 4.C. Shape

Both the substance, gold, and the shape, circular, were symbolic of perfection, unity and eternity. Peacham uses the ring in his emblem on eternal marital love dedicated to Mr. Christopher Collarde and his wife, Mabell [Illustration 23], the second stanza of which reads:

A Turtle heere, upon an Olive sits,  
Upon whose branch, depends a Ring of gold,  
As best the love of Matrimonie fits,  
Thus ever endles, never waxing old,  
The branch and bowes, the fruite that from you spring,  
The Dove your selfe, your wife that golden RING.<sup>49</sup>

Comber enlarges on the relevance of the shape to marriage:

As to the form of it, it is Circular, the most perfect of all figures, which hath no end in it self; and therefore it was of old the Hieroglyphic of Eternity; the round form being also that which is most proper to connect such things as were separate; from whence we may learn that the conjugal Love ought to be the most perfect of all others, and such as ought to endure for ever, since it hath now united two Persons that were distinct before.<sup>50</sup>

The ring's wholeness represents the wholeness and wholesomeness of marriage, and its restoration to Bassanio at the end of the play indicates that he has moved away from the infertile relationship with Antonio to the fertile one with Portia.

#### 5. The glove

While the ring is the most powerful symbol of love and marriage in the play, another iconographic image is juxtaposed with it in the scene in which the lawyer Portia demands the ring from Bassanio, that of the glove. When Portia asks for Bassanio's glove she is conjuring up a whole new set of associations, which while loosely connected with the ring, encompass the concept which Portia is at that moment winning against, friendship. For the Elizabethans, gloves were a far more important item of apparel than they are today, and had considerable symbolic significance. Like the ring, they form part of coronation ceremonies in much of Europe as a symbol of power and authority, and appear in ecclesiastical use symbolising purity of

heart and deed.<sup>51</sup> Both these meanings were subsumed into more common usage, and their appearance in marriage portraits indicates consciousness of status within the marriage. It is almost unknown in portraits of the period to find both partners fully gloved. This reflects the custom of removing gloves as a sign of friendship, as David R. Smith comments:

Schwineköper traces this meaning to the chivalry of the high Middle Ages, where the removal of a gauntlet indicated peaceful intentions. Another source for the friendly connotations of this gesture may be the custom, again originally feudal, of removing one's gloves before one's superiors as a token of humility and openness.<sup>52</sup>

Hence often the man wears one glove and holds the other, while his wife holds both hers, or he may hold both his gloves in one hand, while she has put hers down, indicating his superiority over his wife. In addition to the status question, gloves were important elements in the marriage itself, being given as gifts not only to the bride and groom, but also to the wedding guests.<sup>53</sup> By extension, they were also love tokens, sometimes with an underlying, but strong, promise of fidelity.<sup>54</sup> This can be seen in *Troilus and Cressida* where the ill-fated lovers exchange tokens before parting:

Troilus: And I'll grow friend with danger. Wear this sleeve.

Cressida: And you this glove. When shall I see you? (IV iii 68-69)

When Portia asks Bassanio for his gloves, she is not doing so merely to reveal the ring: Bassanio is unlikely to have been wearing his gloves in the presence of his superior, the Duke. The fact that she asks immediately for the ring also binds the two items together. Both are symbolic of love, the ring symbolising the emotional, legal and financial ties of marriage, while the gloves represents romantic love and fidelity, whether within marriage or not, but the latter also symbolise friendship. It would be pushing the idea too far to say that in taking Bassanio's gloves and his ring, she is, by personifying the articles, stripping him of both his friend and his wife,<sup>55</sup> but the conjunction of two items so closely connected with marriage cannot be gratuitous. Significantly Bassanio requires Portia to:

... grant me two things I pray you, -

Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

(IV i 419-420)

Portia agrees to yield and in doing so she asks two things of him, his gloves and the ring. Portia, in fact has already either granted him what he asks for, or will do so very shortly. She has not denied him, agreeing very willingly to marry him (nor has she denied him any of the material goods which go with her body), and she will pardon him his 'loss' of her



24. G. Donck, *Portrait of a Couple in a Landscape*  
(whereabouts unknown)



25. Frans Hals, *Married Couple in a Garden*  
(*Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen?*), (c1622)  
140 x 166,5 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam





26. Frans Hals, Pair portraits (c1635), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam  
a, *Lucas de Clercq*, 126,5 x 93 cm  
b, *Feyntje van Steenkiste*, 123 x 93 cm



27. Frans Hals, Pair portraits (c1650-2)  
a, *Stephanus Geraerds*, 115 x 87 cm  
b, *Isabella Coymans*, 116 x 86 cm  
Koninklijk Museum Voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp  
Private Collection



ring. The first part of this is related to wooing, and the gloves stand for Bassanio and Portia as lovers. The second part concerns marriage and is more serious, relating as it does to marital fidelity. The ring symbolises the bond of matrimony and love and is contrasted with the bond of hatred that Shylock forges. While the gloves, representing friendship and wooing, do not need to be returned as Portia has broken through the claustrophobic friendship of Antonio and Bassanio, and has finished with courting, being a married lady, the ring, with its much more serious connotations, must be restored to complete the pattern.

#### 6. **Marriage portraits**

Both the ring and the glove are important iconographic elements in the marriage portraits which were popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [Illustrations 24-27]. These are mostly of Netherlandish origin, the genre having apparently been invented there.<sup>56</sup> These portraits helped to 'stimulate a rich tradition of marriage portraiture in the Netherlands and Germany in the fifteenth century'<sup>57</sup> and although the genre is rare in England at the period, artists must have been aware of the trend because many of the prominent artists active in England between 1530 and 1642 were of Flemish or Dutch origin. The notable exceptions, Nicholas Hilliard and George Gower were influenced by French court portraiture, and Hilliard had in fact worked for the Duke of Anjou between 1576 and 1578.<sup>58</sup> It is important to realise, therefore, that England was not, as has sometimes been implied, totally isolated from European artistic trends and influences. Proof of the interest among the literary community in paintings can be seen in John Donne's collection of about twenty paintings which included a Titian.<sup>59</sup> As Margaret F. Thorp points out in her article 'Shakespeare and the Fine Arts'

The Elizabethan period saw the beginning in England of picture collecting and this meant at first chiefly portraits. Kenilworth, Nonesuch Place, Welbeck Abbey, Wilton House, all of which Shakespeare may well have visited, date their famous collections from about this time. The Earl of Southampton had his picture painted more often than any of his contemporaries of whom we have record. Fifteen portraits of him are now extant and Mr. Sidney Lee makes the interesting suggestion that this fact may be responsible for the numerous allusions to paintings in the Sonnets. Portraiture makes the whole theme of two sonnets, the 24th and 47th. Again and again it adds a strain to the main theme; in 16, for instance, 67, 101.<sup>60</sup>

Antonio Mor, a Flemish artist who visited England to paint Mary Tudor had a considerable influence on English art during the 1560s. His style was



28. Nicholas Hilliard, *Unknown Man*, possibly Lord Thomas Howard (1588)  
vellum, oval, 6 x 5 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London



29. Isaac Oliver, *Unknown Man* (c1595-1600)  
vellum, oval 6 x 5.2 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

shadowed and realistic, but was largely rejected by Hilliard whose paintings are brilliantly lit and jewel-like. Despite the difference in the styles of these two influential artists, their interest in the iconography involved in a portrait is the same. In *The English Icon* Roy Strong says

The portrait, being a record of an individual being, is inexorably bound up with that other emanation of renaissance individuality, the *impresa* or emblematic device.<sup>61</sup>

Such interest can be traced in the development of the Elizabethan miniature: Hilliard begins, in the middle of the 1580s, to paint allegorical portraits which contain emblematic images, probably at the request of his sitters. A miniature of an *Unknown Man* [Illustration 28], possibly Lord Thomas Howard, by Hilliard dated 1588<sup>62</sup> shows the sitter clasping his mistress's hand which reaches down from heaven. A later miniature, also of an *Unknown Man* (c1600) [Illustration 29],<sup>63</sup> but this time by Isaac Oliver, shows the sitter against a background of flames indicating his passion, and, according to Strong,<sup>64</sup> referring to Vaenius' emblem of the salamander<sup>65</sup> and Whitney's emblem of the flaming torch.<sup>66</sup>

Mor is known to have painted marriage portraits, usually as pair pendants. His paintings show the influence of the Venetian artist Titian, and the power of iconography can be seen by the suggestion by Adolf Staring that

the enormous popularity Mor's Venetian portrait types quickly acquired among the Dutch middle classes reflects a conscious identification with the maritime republic of Venice<sup>67</sup>

and this despite the fact that Holland and Venice were mortal enemies! The poses in their theatricality suggest an iconographic reading and the genre has its conventions, for instance the man is always on the left and the light comes from that side, casting his feature into dramatic shadows while his wife's face is bathed in light. It is also common to find the husband placed against an open background; an open door or window looking out into the world, while the wife is shown with a closed background, reflecting their respective places in the world. Such a relationship can be traced as far back as Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Marriage* [Illustration 16], where Giovanni Arnolfini stands on the left of the painting with a window behind him, while his wife, Giovanna Cenami, stands on the right with the marriage bed as her background.

This relationship between female/interior scenes and male/exterior ones has relevance to *The Merchant of Venice*. Our first meeting with Antonio, Bassanio and their friends is outside, presumably in a Venetian street.

This scene is followed immediately by Portia and Nerissa inside the house at Belmont, where Portia suffers from a kind of sexual claustrophobia. This alternation of male/external and female/internal continues up to II iii where the location of the scene is ambiguous but as it shows Jessica conversing with her father's servant it can be assumed that it is internal. The next scene with Gratiano, Lorenzo, Solanio, Salerio and Launcelot is back in the streets of Venice. II v involves Shylock and Jessica and is set before Shylock's house, with the emphasis on Jessica's place *within* the house. II vi brings the internal and external together when the lovers, Lorenzo and Jessica appear together, he outside in the street, and she in the house above. Jessica breaks the pattern by coming out of her world and into Lorenzo's and the change is emphasised by her assuming masculine attire. From then on she has no house or home of her own. In II vii the pattern is resumed with Portia 'at home' to Morocco and continues until III ii when the second pair of lovers, Portia and Bassanio, come together, this time in an internal and feminine environment. Whereas Jessica has left her interior background to go to Lorenzo, Bassanio leaves the streets of Venice to join Portia in her elegant house. Unlike Lorenzo, Bassanio is forced to leave his betrothed immediately, and the pattern resumes for two scenes. III v shows Jessica and Lorenzo in an unlocalised place, but evidently still in the interior world of Belmont, and IV i again shatters the pattern because like Jessica, Portia rejects her feminine role and assumes a masculine one to follow her lover. In order for the women to enter, and play an active role in the male/external world, they must 'become' men; they cannot participate in their feminine personae. The court room, however, is neither internal nor external, being a ceremonial place, symbolic in its own right. After the trial scene in IV ii Portia is shown in the male/external world, still in her male disguise. The final Act brings the characters together (minus Shylock) in the gardens of Belmont. Although this is an external scene, it is Portia's home, her place, and thus a blend of the two opposing worlds. Bassanio and Gratiano have to adjust to the new situation and this involves realising that Portia and Nerissa have been able to function in their male environment. Portia's 'Let us go in' (V i 297) invites them to become part of the whole house, internal and external, a complete world rather than a divided one. Belmont brings the lovers and their worlds together like two halves of a whole, unifying them in spirit and in body. Hence Gratiano's final remark is not out of place, and reminds the audience of the symbolism of the ring - wholeness and unity.

## 7. Love vs. Friendship

Portia's role in the trial scene reflects not only her commitment to Bassanio in her willingness to save his friend, both by money and by direct action, but also her own need to release Bassanio from the restriction of his love for Antonio. Marriage was seen by some as a means of dividing a man from his friends, and in Petrarch's *Of the woorthinesse of Marriage* in his *Physicke* we again encounter shipwreck imagery, this time in depicting the wife as a dangerous reef. Reason states:

Admit she have all other ornamentes of a woman, nobilitie, wysedome, ryches, fruitefulnesse, eloquence, good name and fame, good and commendable behaviour, yet know thou this, that with these pride is entred ... Art thou ignoraunt of the maners of women: Learne to serve, learne to suffer, learne to loose thy deerest friendes: thou must attende to wedlocke only. A wyfe is a dangerous rocke, and destruction to friendship, imperious, and governour of the husbandes affections.<sup>68</sup>

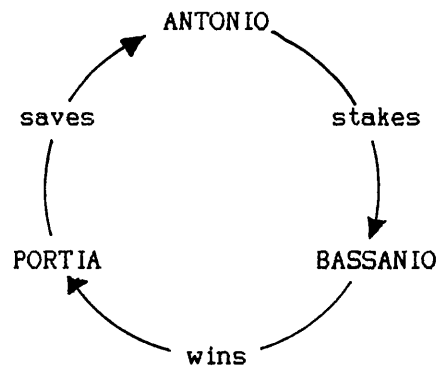
While Portia conforms to all the virtues that Petrarch enumerates; nobility, wisdom, wealth, eloquence, reputation and behaviour, and the implication is that she will also be fertile, she does not exhibit the vice which he accuses wives of, that of pride. Bassanio willingly offers his service, but she returns it by calling him Lord, and although he will suffer anxiety and risk the loss of his friend, it will not be at Portia's instigation. Indeed, she will be the one to rescue his friend from the dangerous rock of Shylock's bond. Nevertheless, she must redirect his affection towards her instead of towards Antonio. Friendship, while being a serious matter, especially for many Elizabethans who had formed the idea into a kind of cult, is on its own infertile, and must make way for the natural coupling of man and woman, for as Benedict says 'the world must be peopled' (*Much Ado About Nothing*, II iii 218-219). Antonio, in his acceptance of his doom, presents a melancholy hero for Bassanio to worship. Had Shylock's plans succeeded, Antonio would have been transformed into a saintly martyr, and Bassanio would never have been able to free himself of the sense of guilt as the indirect cause of his friend's death. Portia has to save Antonio in order to free Bassanio; she must transfer Bassanio's obligation from Antonio to herself, and this she does by first winning her court case, and then refusing a fee, putting Bassanio in her debt. By demanding the ring as a token of gratitude, she is tying Bassanio closer to her, knowing that he will have to admit its 'loss' and that she alone will be able to restore it, as she has restored Antonio. She shows, however, that this is not simply feminine jealousy, or a power play in the war of the sexes, by involving Antonio in the final exchange of the ring.

He becomes bound to support the marriage on his soul; the bond is a spiritual one, in contrast to the physical bond he agreed with Shylock. Whereas his body was bound in the interests of revenge, his soul is bound in the interests of love, and he is transformed from a potential wedge to an actual bridge. Metaphorically, Antonio himself becomes the ring, the pledge of love and trust, between Portia and Bassanio, and the play is brought full circle as Antonio becomes again the means by which Bassanio can win Portia.

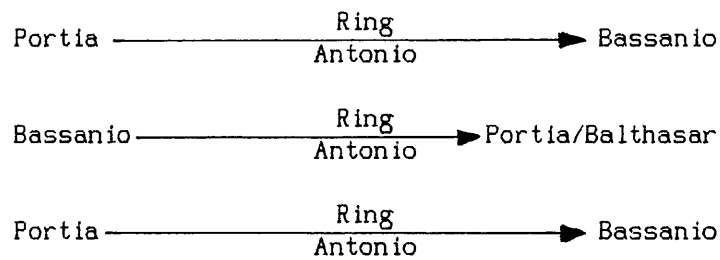
Sigurd Burckhardt sees the play as circular; Portia rescues Antonio *because* Bassanio has won her *because* Antonio has staked him.

*The Merchant* is a play about circularity and circulation; it asks how the vicious circle of the bond's law can be transformed into the ring of love. And it answers: through a literal and unreserved submission to the bond as absolutely binding.<sup>69</sup>

If a simplified diagram is made of the movement of the play this circularity is clear:



The first trip around the circle involves the physical bond with Shylock, the second the spiritual bond between Portia and Bassanio. Portia defeats Shylock not by circumventing the bond, but by sticking rigidly to the letter of the law. She threatens to do this in the matter of the ring, giving up Bassanio as he has given up her ring, the symbol of the contract between them, but as Antonio gave up his share in Shylock's wealth, so he gives up his share in Bassanio, and pledges his soul for his fidelity. In doing so he redresses the wrong he has done Portia in persuading Bassanio to give up her ring to the lawyer, and becomes the means of exchange when she returns it:



That this love-bond is more important than the hate-bond is obvious; the soul is more precious than the body, moreover, it is eternal, while the body dies. The acceptance of the ring by Bassanio establishes a binding, legal contract, and by giving the ring away he is breaking the contract. He is, therefore, in effect doing what he had offered to do at the trial, give away his wife for his friend. The contract is only re-established when Portia returns the ring to him.

## Chapter 4

### ANTONIO AS AN ANATOMY SUBJECT

#### 1. Shakespeare and anatomy

Although Shakespeare makes no direct reference to anatomy in *The Merchant of Venice*, he does elsewhere. Marvin Spevack<sup>1</sup> lists five occurrences of 'anatomy', three of 'anatomize' and three of 'anatomiz'd'. Seven of these references are to the more metaphysical idea of anatomy as a dissection of a whole thing or idea, but the remaining four refer to actual physical dissections. This shows that Shakespeare was well aware of the work of the anatomists and that the idea had gained hold of society sufficiently for it to be used in a more general metaphysical way, and that it was a subject familiar enough to the general public to make references to it both comprehensible and topical. A history of anatomy and anatomy theatres can be found in Appendix A.

#### 2. The dramatist and the anatomist

In his foreword to M. H. Spielmann's book *The Iconography of Andreas Vesalius*, Arthur Keith relates Shakespeare to the great anatomist Vesalius

In the quality of his work Vesalius is near akin to Shakespeare. Both of these men in their respective lines of endeavour held up the mirror to Nature.<sup>2</sup>

In their attempts to teach by revelation, both anatomist and dramatist have similar goals. John Banister's dedicatory epistle in his *Historie of Man* concerns anatomy but applies equally to drama:

... even so man (saith Aristotle) is borne to two thinges, that is, to understand, and to do, or endeavour: as who should say, we are not borne onely to have understanding, but also to put it in use ... And surely Cicero supposeth it cannot be in a man to hid his vertue in him selfe. Which moved him to say, we are driven to it of nature, to desire to profite many, especialy in teaching, and revealing the reasons of wisdom. Therefore it is not easie to finde such a one, as will not be content to teach that unto an other, which he knoweth him selfe. So that we are not onely inclined to learne, but to teach also.<sup>3</sup>

It has been suggested by various critics<sup>4</sup> that Antonio represents Everyman or a Christ-figure in the trial scene. Certainly his bearing is that of a willing sacrificial offering and the theological elements in the trial predispose one to entertain the existence of a religious symbolism (which will be dealt with in Chapter 6), but Antonio also provides a picture of a more secular event, that of a public anatomy.



### 3. The relationship between anatomy and the theatre

The resemblance to a public anatomy of the trial scene on the stage can only have been emphasised by the physical structure of the playhouse, with its circular galleries surrounding the central area of interest. The audience thus become a part of the scene themselves and are spectators on two levels; playhouse audience and anatomy theatre audience.

#### 3.a. Entertainment and education

The history of anatomies shows an increasing importance of the entertainment element. William Brockbank states

The [anatomy] theatre arose out of the stream of ideas which flowed through Italy at the time of the Renaissance. Its purpose was to offer a performance, for ... an anatomical dissection in those days was really more of a theatrical occasion than a lesson.<sup>5</sup>

William S. Heckscher agrees:

These were people with a vast stomach for all kinds of entertainment, among which the annual public anatomy ranked perhaps highest. To every one of the two or three hundred individuals who might witness the dissection, the pleasantly morbid actuality of the festive anatomy must have been, year after year, a unique and exciting experience. While naturally the anatomy was a lesson in the first place, it also appealed in Rembrandt's time to those craving dramatic entertainment as well as those in quest of quiet transcendental contemplation.<sup>6</sup>

and later he continues

The public anatomy as a fete and as a social obligation ... was known all over Europe from the early sixteenth century onward.<sup>7</sup>

While 'education' and 'entertainment' were not synonymous, they appear to have been regarded as complimentary. For example at Leyden there are records of the presence of flute-players during the dissection in order to *entertain* the spectators.<sup>8</sup> The popularity (or perhaps notoriety) of the public anatomy can be shown as early as 1570 when records in Bologna show that the current professor was forced to appoint

four serious, quiet and discreet students to stand at the doors of the theatre when a dissection was being performed and allow only authorized persons to enter so that it would be filled solely with doctors and students and other persons of good qualities who entered for the purpose of listening and learning.<sup>9</sup>

The anatomies performed in England at the Barber-Surgeons' Hall from 1540 onwards show a development away from a teaching situation towards a ceremonial and theatrical occasion. At the opening of Inigo Jones' Anatomy Theatre for the Barber-Surgeons in 1638 a dinner costing £93 (two-thirds



30. Andreas Vesalius, Frontispiece to *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (Basel, 1543)

being spent on food, £8 on wine and 35 shillings on beer) was held after an inaugural public anatomy performed before an audience which included the Lords of the Privy Council.<sup>10</sup> Samuel Pepys was invited to a demonstration by Dr. Scarborough and seems to have enjoyed both the lecture and the feast afterwards. After dinner he returned to look at the body accompanied by Dr. Scarborough and commented

he was a lusty fellow, a seaman that was hanged for a robbery. I did touch the dead body with my bare hand; it felt cold, but methought it was a very unpleasant sight. (27 February 1663)<sup>11</sup>

Public anatomies were a more expensive business than private ones because of the feasting and ceremony which they involved. Anatomies were well known in the lay community. The public were admitted for a fee, and broad-sheets were hung up outside barbers' and surgeons' shops as advertisements to entice public attendance. By 1734 newspapers were being used to advertise anatomies:

Whereof Notice shall also be given in the Daily Post and in the S<sup>t</sup> James<sup>m</sup> Evening Post as oft as those Demonstrations are made when also the publick Lectures may be Advertized ... The Notice of the Publick Lectures and of ye Demonstrations shall be Inserted in the Daily Advertiser and London Evening Post from time to time for the year ensuing, and afterwards in such newspapers as the Master for the time being shall think fitt.<sup>12</sup>

Eight years later, however, in 1742, another notice makes it clear that the public spectacle aspect of anatomies was disappearing in favour of a more serious role in teaching by discontinuing such advertisements:

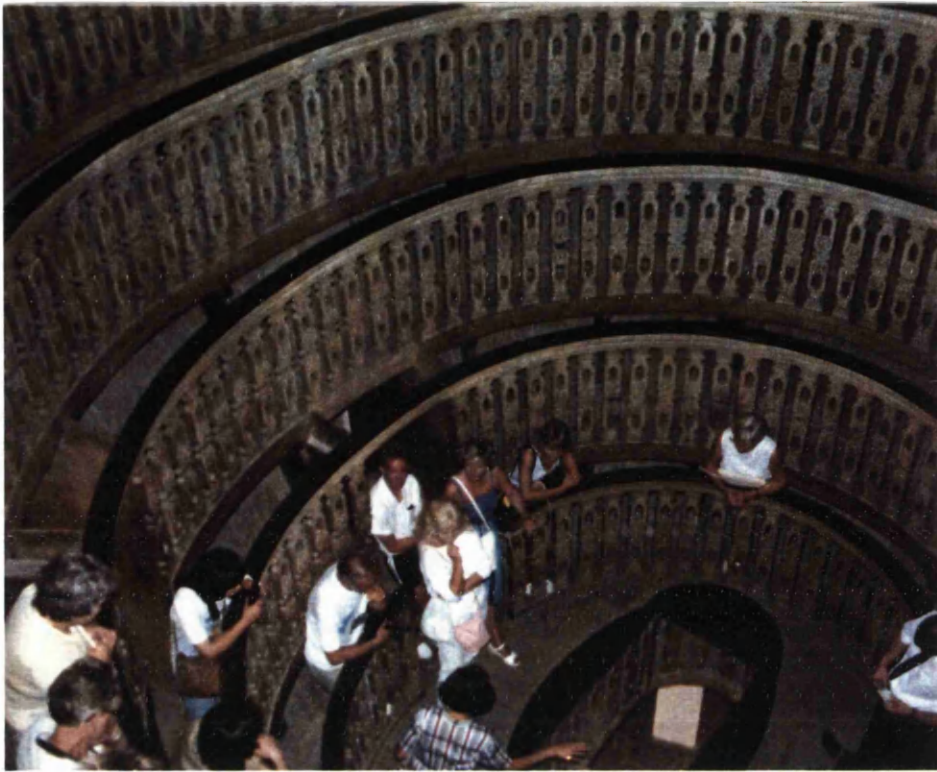
the advertising of dissections as formerly used shall be discontinued.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.b. The playhouse and the anatomy theatre

#### 3.b.i. Construction

There are strong correspondences between the structure of an anatomy theatre and that of a public theatre. The first anatomy theatres were built outside or in adapted rooms and were temporary in nature,<sup>14</sup> in the same way that inn court yards were adapted for the use of Elizabethan players, and any extra erections were demolished once their usefulness was over. There is evidence that some anatomy theatres, like the public theatres, were open to the sky. The frontispiece shared by Vesalius' *Fabrica* and his *Epitome* [Illustration 30] shows Vesalius himself giving an anatomy demonstration in an apparently open-air theatre. Brockbank also quotes Vidus Vidius' *De anatome corporis humani*, published posthumously in 1611, but, as Vidius died in 1569, giving an account of things as they





31. The anatomy theatre at Padua  
a. the galleries



b. the dissection area



32. Construction of the anatomy theatre at Padua  
a. looking up from the dissection area



b. below the galleries

were in the mid-sixteenth century, in which he gives details of the construction of a temporary anatomy theatre which includes the requirement that

Lighting should be either *through a hole in the roof* or by two candles at the head and two at the feet of the body. (my italics) <sup>15</sup>

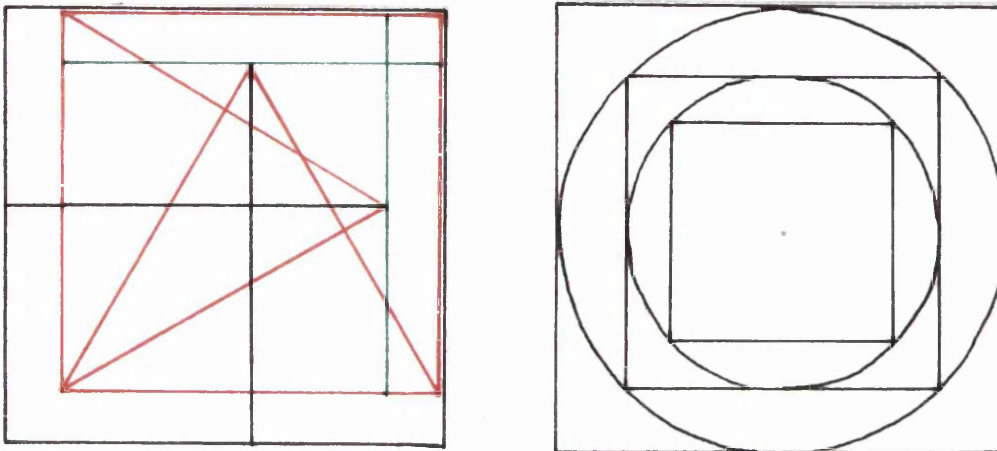
It is interesting and probably significant that a theatrical designer and architect was chosen to build the first purpose-built anatomy theatre. Inigo Jones evidently used his experience of theatres to create a building suitable for exhibitions and demonstrations, and elements of the public theatres can be seen, for instance, in the general shape, the galleries and in the use of external turrets to house staircases.

In Vidius' description of the construction of a temporary anatomy theatre, he says:

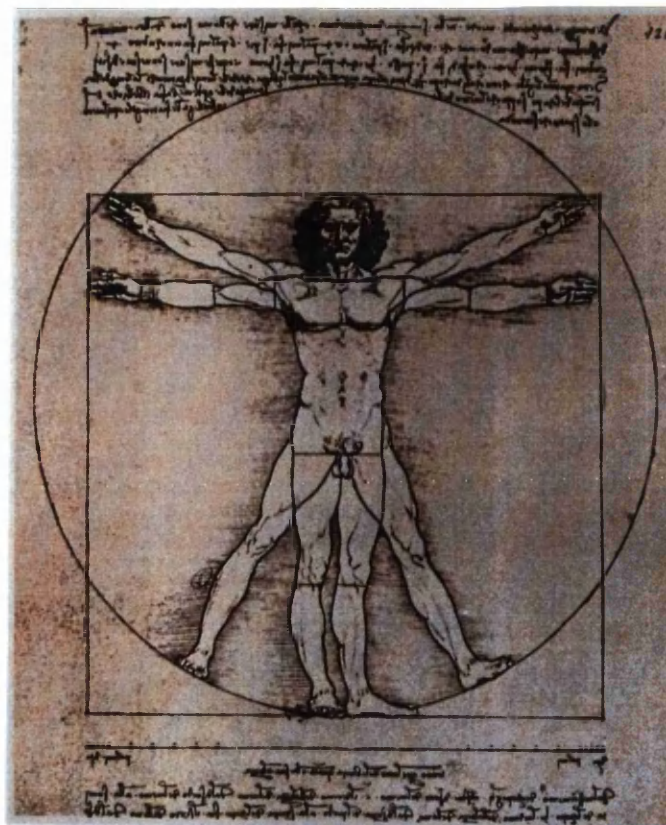
The building which is to contain the theatre should be square. In it an octangular amphitheatre can easily be constructed in the following manner. Get eight beams which should be placed at equal distances from each other, with their top touching the wall, their bottom the ground, towards the middle of the stage. Leave a passage, a sort of portico, between the wall and the stage to act as an entrance from the outer door of the room and opposite another passage to a little room where are kept a fire, wood, hot water, vessels and all the necessary apparatus. When the beams have been put up, there should be attached to them four or five more, platforms looking towards the centre, with a space of six feet between them. They should be supported on wooden props which are nailed to the beams. *The lower platforms should be narrower than the higher* so that the higher stages hold more spectators than the lower. *These should stand as if leaning on a pulpit so that they can see what is going on on the stage.* (my italics)<sup>16</sup>

The Paduan anatomy theatre, [Illustration 31] one of the few to survive intact, is built into a room in the University, and allows the visitor to view the construction from below [Illustration 32]. This construction is similar to that of a public theatre. Richard Hosley has made an extensive investigation into the building of the Swan (1595) in his chapter on the Playhouses.<sup>17</sup> By a process of mathematical elimination he arrives at a twenty-four sided building with a diameter of 95 feet and a stage 43 feet wide by 27 feet 6 inches deep. John Orrell, in his extremely thorough research in *The Quest for Shakespeare's Globe*<sup>18</sup> agrees that the public playhouses, with the exception of the Fortune, which was atypically square, must have been polygonal, rather than round, and has worked out with mathematical precision precise dimensions based partly on Hollar's sketches and partly on the ancient methods of measurement and proportion,





33. Diagrams demonstrating the theories of proportion  
 a, *ad triangulum* b, *ad quadratum*  
 (cf n.19, pp.313-4)



34. Leonardo da Vinci, Man and the proportions

*ad triangulum*<sup>19</sup> and *ad quadratum* [Illustration 33] which result in a stage measuring 49 feet 6 inches wide, a yard 70 feet across and an overall diameter of 99 feet, although he admits that this is, to a certain extent, still conjecture.<sup>20</sup> He makes the point that the *ad quadratum* system of proportion is linked to the *homo ad quadratum* - the method of relating all proportions to the human figure, from which is ultimately derived Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing [Illustration 34]. He goes on

Unfortunately we cannot say, on the present evidence, that Street or Burbage or anyone else intended the Elizabethan theatre to echo the Vitruvian idea of the 'homo ad quadratum'. A detailed knowledge of the *Architectura* would hardly be necessary to suggest such an intention; the idea was widely illustrated and vivid enough to appeal in its own right. On the other hand we can be certain that Inigo Jones, in his schematic design for a man-centred anatomy theatre prepared for the Barber-Surgeon's Company in 1636, used *ad quadratum* procedures to develop its oval plan.<sup>21</sup>

The idea that buildings so concerned with the exploration of mankind as playhouses and anatomy theatres should have their designs based so firmly on proportions related to the human body is a highly attractive one. As Orrell goes on to say:

The Barber-Surgeons' theatre is an enlightening *post facto* analogue of the Globe. Its curved walls, designed *ad quadratum*, enclose an audience with man himself surrounded at the centre.<sup>22</sup>

The timber-frame structure requires that each gallery overhangs the one below to give structural stability, creating an upper tier with a larger area than the lower (although Orrell points out that the second Globe would not have had these, their having been forbidden in 1611 by proclamation). The staggered arrangement reflects the situation Vidius describes. Hosley's calculations are supported by the builders' contract for the Fortune (1599) which calls for a 10 inch 'juttey forwardes' in the upper storeys, and by the structure of existing Elizabethan timber-framed houses.<sup>23</sup>

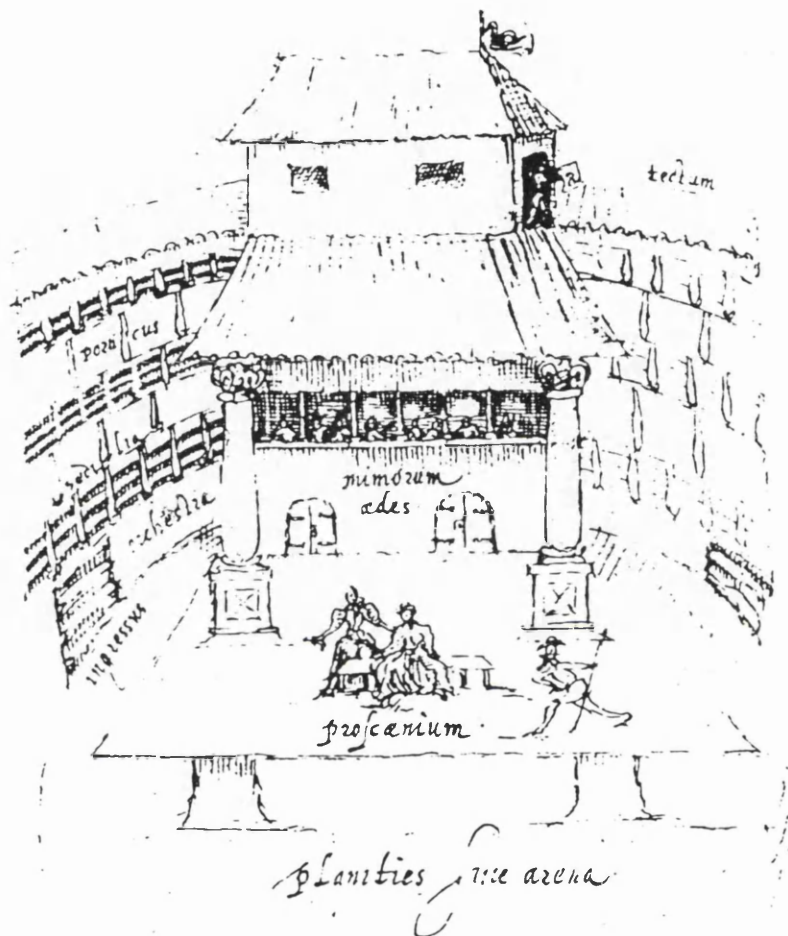
### 3.b.11. Staircases

In respect of the staircases, Brockbank, referring to Jones' anatomy theatre, states that

The staircases giving access to the seats were placed outside the theatre in two square turrets on either side of the entrance façade giving the maximum amount of room for the seating.<sup>24</sup>

The Swan also had outside staircases, as did the Globe.<sup>25</sup> Hosley puts forward a cogent argument for entrance direct to the yard area through the base of the stair turrets and, without having to enter the yard,





quantum ad spectari et structure, hystoriarum comicarum  
 prius designatum, in quo multi vixi, Tauri, et Elephantia  
 magnitudinis rari, dyfictis cautis et fortis aluntur, qui

35. Arend van Buchell's copy of a sketch by Johannes de Witt  
*The Swan* (shortly after 1596),  
 Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Utrecht

access to the galleries.<sup>26</sup> His argument against a single, central entrance to the playhouse is supported by John Chamberlain's account of the burning of the first Globe in 1613: 'it was a great marvaile and fair grace of God, that the people had so little harm, having but two narrow doors to get out'<sup>27</sup>, and for proof of entrance through the stair turrets he relies on mathematical calculation and Thomas Platter's description of the progressive gathering of admission fees at a Bankside playhouse in 1599

There are different galleries and places, however, where the seating is better and more comfortable and therefore more expensive. For whoever cares to stand below only pays one English penny, but if he wishes to sit he enters by another door, and pays another penny, while if he desires to sit in the most comfortable seats which are cushioned, where he not only sees everything well, but can also be seen, then he pays yet another English penny at another door.<sup>28</sup>

Hosley interprets the system described thus:

Whether his destination was the yard, a gallery or one of the gentlemen's rooms, a spectator would enter the playhouse by the exterior door in the foot of one of the stair-towers, paying 1d. to a gatherer stationed at that point. Having entered that door, the spectator could continue directly along the passage running through the playhouse frame and, without further payment, emerge into the yard ... Or, if he were willing to pay additionally for a seat in one of the galleries or one of the gentlemen's rooms, he could, immediately after having entered the stair-tower, turn at right angles and pass through an interior door giving access to the tower stairs. At this door he would pay a second 1d. to a second gatherer [which] would entitle [him] to a place in any of the three galleries ... if the two lower galleries were filled, the spectator would have no choice but to continue up the stairs to the top gallery ... Thus the top gallery would be a sort of overflow area, in general use only when the house enjoyed full or nearly full capacity. Further, if the spectator were willing to pay for even greater comfort than that afforded by the 2d. rooms, he could pass round the frame along the top degree of the first gallery to the gentlemen's rooms (lying adjacent to the tiring-house), which he could then enter through a pass door after paying a third 1d. to a third gatherer.<sup>29</sup>

Orrell remarks that Hosley's circulation system is

ably addressed ... on the basis of a minimum of evidence and a great deal of alert common sense.<sup>30</sup>

Hosley's explanation of the *ingressus* of the drawing of the Swan interior by Arend van Buchell after a lost original by Johannes De Witt (c1596) [Illustration 35] is that De Witt, situated directly opposite the stage, was unable to see the entrances but wished to show them in his drawing and so took the artistic licence of moving them around the arena towards the stage. Buchell, copying the original, misunderstood the openings which

Hosley believes were intended to show the ends of the seating risers of the lowest gallery, visible along the passageway under the stair-towers.<sup>31</sup>

If one accepts Hosley's theory there is a further resemblance between the public theatre and the anatomy theatre in that there is no direct access between the lowest level (the yard and the dissecting area) and the upper galleries. There is a strong sense of social division in this separation, but the placement of the classes is inverted in the two cases. In the public theatres the yard was the cheapest area and the upper galleries more expensive; in the anatomy theatres it was the lowest tier that was reserved for the academic hierarchy and distinguished guests, whilst the upper tiers were filled with students and lay people. In the private playhouses the system resembled the anatomy theatres, with the wealthiest and most important patrons closest to the stage, and the cheapest places in the 'gods'. In all three venues trouble was taken to ensure that the classes should be kept separate. A Minute from the Annals of the Barber Surgeons for 23 March 1635 orders that surgeons should be fined for not attending anatomies in their gowns

for wanting their outward ornament commixing themselves confusedly amongst the Comon people then present.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.b.iii. Lifts

Inigo Jones' anatomy theatre may have had a lift to bring up the body. This, like the elliptical shape, could have been copied from the Paduan anatomy theatre which also had one<sup>33</sup>, but another source closer to home could be found in the stage trapdoor with its lifting platform. That there may very well have been something like a lift in the theatrical stage can be seen from an examination of the physical staging of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. In *Macbeth* IV i 106 Macbeth says 'Why *sinks* that cauldron?' (my italics), and in a play performed by Shakespeare's company, *A Warning for Fair Women*, a stage direction in the dumb-show, '*suddenly riseth up a great tree*',<sup>34</sup> reveals clearly that some kind of lifting mechanism must have been in use. The date of the Paduan anatomy theatre would prove that such simple engineering was quite within the grasp of the builders of the public theatres. Unfortunately, the demolition of Jones' anatomy theatre in 1784 removed any evidence which could have demonstrated this.

## 3.b.iv. The discovery space

In *The Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* for 1st February 1568 these instructions appear:

and also ther shalbe pyllers and Rodes of Iron made to beare and drawe Courteynes upon and aboute the frame where within the Anathomy doth lye and is wrought upon, for bycawse that no persone or persones shall beholde the desections or incysynges of the body, but that all maye be made cleane and covered with fayer clothes untill the Docter shall com and take his place to reade and declare upon the partes desected.<sup>35</sup>

This implies that in some, if not all, anatomy theatres in England, contrary to the practice on the continent, the body was already opened when it appeared at the anatomy, and that the steward had only to point at the areas being discussed, rather than actually to have to dissect them in view of the audience. It also shows that England was behind the continent in adopting Vesalius' method of a simultaneous lecture and demonstration done by one person. English lecturers, it would seem, preferred to remain removed from the body, speaking *ex cathedra* and referring to a text book.

There does not seem to be any continental precedent for a curtained area for the body, but in the history of the theatre much controversy has been aroused by discussions regarding an inner stage. Whether one subscribes to the curtained alcove at the back of the stage theory, or to the idea of portable booths, the similarities cannot be denied. Both the stage and the anatomy theatre use the curtained area as a *discovery* space, and however the *Annals* reason the curtains' usage, the result must have provided a theatrical and dramatic element in the revelation of the body. As yet no one has considered the relationship between this revelation of the body by means of a curtain and the scene in which Hamlet pulls back the curtains to reveal the butchered body of Polonius, nor has any connection been made between Hamlet's careless treatment of Polonius' body and the similar disregard for the sanctity of the human body demonstrated by the anatomists. Hamlet, like the anatomists, regards the dead Polonius as a collection of viscera: 'Lug the guts'<sup>36</sup> (my italics).

The term *discovery space* when used in the theatre suggests an area which will reveal new things to the spectators – new things which will increase their knowledge of the play, and give further insight into the plot. The anatomies also revealed the secrets of the body to the spectators. Neither was seen as a research tool but both imparted new information. The playwright is like the anatomist, revealing facts in a systematic

progression to an audience who are mentally if not physically involved in the action. Both peel back a succession of layers to show the heart underneath. The characters, in turn, are, like the anatomy subject, acted upon. As fictitious entities they have no knowledge of the dramatist's intentions for them, or life apart from his hand. Without him they are as dead as the anatomy subject. They are anatomised by him in the metaphysical sense - their thoughts, feelings and motivation are dissected upon the stage in view of an interested crowd. The ability to understand a character or the biology of the human body comes only with the professional skill of revelation.

Portia uses the discovery space when she reveals the caskets to Morocco:

Go draw aside the curtains and discover  
The several caskets to this noble Prince. (II vi 1-2)

Morocco's deliberations while making his choice of casket reveal the workings of his character in the same way that the anatomist's lecture reveals the workings of the body. Although Morocco believes his motivations to be valid, Shakespeare shows the prince's innermost feelings to the audience by a metaphysical stripping of his personality, as the anatomist strips away the skin to reveal the internal organs. The cold light of the discovery area of both playhouse and anatomy theatre reveals hidden truth.

### 3.b.v. Tickets

There was also a relationship between the public anatomies and the public theatre in its financial position. Heckscher comments that while the private anatomies were providing important information in the extension of knowledge in respect of scientific discoveries:

the formal anatomies ... represented equally important chapters in the historical development of the stage. The success of an anatomy, just like that of any other theatrical performance, depended largely on the size and on the sympathetic response of its audience. The anatomies of this type were expressly designed to attract and to hold large numbers of onlookers. They needed financial success, also, and had therefore to depend on the support and approval of the masses no less than Shakespeare's plays in London or Vondel's in Amsterdam.<sup>37</sup>

He goes on to point out that to attend an anatomy, tickets had to be purchased (this applied internationally) and that this seems to have preceded the sale of playhouse tickets by several years. The ceremonial and financial aspects of an anatomy can be seen from Baldasar Heseler's eyewitness description of his first dissection class with Vesalius:

The anatomy of our subject was arranged in the place where they use to elect the Rector medicorum; a table on which the subject was laid, was conveniently and well installed with four steps of benches in a circle, so that nearly 200 persons could see the anatomy. However, nobody was allowed to enter before the anatomists, and after them, those who had paid 20 *sol.* More than 150 students were present and D. Curtius, Erigius, and many other doctors, followers of Curtius. At last, D. Andreas Vesalius arrived, and many candles were lighted, so that we all should see.<sup>38</sup>

Entrance fees to the anatomies were being charged as early as 1493 according to Alessandro Benedetti's description:

There must be some one man in charge who oversees and arranges everything. Warders are to be provided for regulation of the unruly incoming rabble. Two reliable stewards are appointed who out of the *admissions fees* supply the necessary [here a list of surgical instruments]<sup>39</sup> (my italics)

In the 1528 edition, the translation reads:

There must be guards to restrain the *eager public* as it enters. Two reliable stewards should be chosen to make the necessary payments from *the money that is collected*.<sup>40</sup> (my italics)

While anatomy tickets were being sold in Padua in 1497, no playhouse tickets can be traced further back than 1500. Heckscher goes on to say:

This, incidentally, is only one of a number of aspects suggesting, it seems to me, that studies of the history of the stage should include the anatomical theaters.<sup>41</sup>

He does not, however, pursue the matter any further, nor has any other critic followed up his suggestions.

Tickets for anatomies were certainly being issued in England according to a document which gives directions to a new clerk of the Company of Barber Surgeons:

So soon as the body is brought in deliver out your Ticketts which must be first filled up as followeth 4 sorts. The first fforme to the Surgeons who have served the office of Master you must say Be pleased to attend etc, with which sumons you send another for the Demonstrations; to those below the Chaire you say Our Masters desire your Company in your Gown and flatt Cap etc with the like notice for the Demonstrations as you send the Antient Master Surgeons. To the Barbers if Ancient Masters you say Be Pleased to attend in your Gowns only; and if belowe the Chaire then Our Masters desire etc as to the others above without the Tickett for the Demonstrations.<sup>42</sup>

Although there is no mention made of payment in this document, it is clear that admission to the anatomy demonstration was not possible without a ticket.

#### 4. Antonio as anatomy subject

##### 4.a. The court as an anatomy theatre

In *The Merchant of Venice* the climax of the play comes in Act IV in the trial scene and the way the scene is staged can materially effect how powerful the dramatic impact is. It is clear that Shakespeare intended the trial to be a formal and ceremonial occasion. He brings the Duke, the Magnificoes, Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano and other extras in at the very beginning of the scene in a procession. The atmosphere of a formal and legal proceeding is set when the Duke commands

Go one, and call the Jew into the court (IV i 14)

It is important that the Duke be seated centrally, as he would almost certainly have been on the Shakespearean stage. The 'state' or the ceremonial throne, set on a raised dais, was an important property of the theatre, and established immediately the ruling status of whoever occupied it.<sup>43</sup> The 'state' was the place of prestige and power, and Shakespeare deliberately uses its emblematic quality, as in *Henry VIII* I i and II iv where in the first scene Katherine is placed next to the King's 'state', and in the second, now out of favour, she is kept distant from it. Sometimes he plays on the symbolism by investing the 'state' with a wholly unworthy ruler, as in *Richard III* where Richard announces to Buckingham:

Thus high, by thy service  
And thy assistance, is King Richard seated.<sup>44</sup> (IV ii 3-4)

The Duke's place, therefore, is in command, raised above the rest of the court, at the centre of the stage, and at first Shylock stands before him. Later on Antonio should take a central position below the Duke, with Portia and Shylock arranged on either side. Throughout the scene it is emphasised that this is a court, a formal space in which a ritual is taking place. Antonio is the central figure of the scene, the pivotal point around which the action takes place, but he is also a static figure. He stands patiently, bare-chested, vulnerable, and like the anatomist's cadaver, passive. Despite his key role he is given little to say. Shylock and Portia argue across him for the possession of his body, and his position is that of a victim rather than an active participant. He waits, like the body to be dissected, to be acted upon.

##### 4.b. The anatomists: Shylock and Portia

Shylock stands ready, whetting his knife, while the Duke sits enthroned in his chair of state above him. Portia argues the case and manipulates

Shylock as the ostensor might direct the steward. A hierarchy reveals itself. Shylock, in his animalistic desire for revenge, rejecting the human plea for mercy, stands in the place of the lower order, fit only to take orders and not to think for themselves. His abandonment of his rational self has thus degraded him. Portia, as a rational, merciful human being, shows her superiority to Shylock in her ability to judge the situation and act accordingly. The Duke is the ultimate authority, tied by the laws of the land and enforced to rule by the book. His counterpart is the professor, lecturing from his *cathedra* and using ancient texts whose very age have incurred an aura of unassailable authority. Duke and professor are hampered by the very laws and learning which they seek to dispense. Portia tries to break through the entrenched literalism of the law in her demands for mercy. She reflects Vesalius's attempts to lead medical and surgical knowledge towards a more direct and flexible attitude to anatomical research, but both Portia and Vesalius battle against a reactionary old school. Portia beats the system by using the system itself. Vesalius's breakthrough was slow and frustrating and it seems that he lost heart in his revolution, for he later gave up anatomy altogether.<sup>45</sup> It can be no coincidence that Portia poses as a doctor from Padua - the universally renowned university at which Vesalius taught - nor that Padua had been under the rule of Venice since 1404, and that during Vesalius' time there he visited Venice frequently and was nominated by the 'illustrious Senate of Venice' as Professor of Surgery at Padua in 1537.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.c. Shylock's transition from anatomist to anatomy

Shylock follows Portia's directions without seeing where they are leading him, much as the humble steward might have followed the ostensor's directions without being aware of what was being revealed. The ostensor's orders direct the steward to strip away progressively parts of the body to reveal the workings underneath, and to uncover the areas which were considered to be the moving forces in the essence of man, but having allowed Shylock to strip away Antonio's protective covering, Portia turns the tables on the Jew and shows that what he has been doing is actually a progressive stripping of himself, as he has been manoeuvred into revealing his real desires. She then peels back his own protection until he is nothing but 'a poor, bare, forked animal' (*King Lear* III iv 106-107). The quotation from *Lear* is apt, because Shakespeare uses the same mathematical progression in that play when Lear is gradually stripped of all his retainers, originally one hundred in number:



Regan: ... return and sojourn with my sister,  
 Dismissing half your train ...  
 ... If you will come to me -  
 For now I spy a danger - I entreat you  
 To bring but five and twenty ...  
 Goneril: ... What need you five and twenty, ten, or five ...  
 Regan: ... What need one?

(*King Lear* II iv 202-203, 245-247, 260, 263)

The result is chilling in the extreme; Lear has been cut to the heart by his daughters' ingratitude and his anguished reply 'O, reason not the need!' is an echo of Shylock's 'Nay, take my life and all' (IV i 369), although it will be pointed out in section 1.e. of Chapter 6 that Shylock's reaction is suspect. Shakespeare uses this mathematical progression for comic purposes in *1 Henry IV*, but this time in an ascending scale, where Falstaff's "buckram men" increase from two to four to seven to nine to eleven (II iv 183-211). In each case the gradual stripping away or adding to increases the tension/humour, but also has the effect of revealing something of the true nature of the character. Shylock's situation is between the two extremes of agony and laughter, and because his loss involves both money and religion, it can be argued that Portia, in acting so upon him, is following Christ's words:

For whosoever hath, to him shalbe given, and he shal have abundance:  
 but whosoever hath not, from him shalbe taken away, even that he  
 hath. (Matthew 13. 12)

In this peeling away of Shylock's natural protection, first his profit, then his principal, then his own wealth and finally even his soul in the shape of his religion, Portia turns Shylock from the anatomist into the anatomy, the fate he had intended for Antonio. But Portia also insists on some soul-searching on Antonio's part. He must see into his own heart and, ridding himself of any hatred, show mercy to his enemy. Both Antonio and Shylock come close to death but are saved by a seeming miracle, a rapid change in the circumstances of the case.

#### 4.d. The resurrection of the anatomy subject

What happens is that both Antonio and Shylock are re-born. Both lose their life to a legality, but have those lives restored unexpectedly. The connection with anatomies is not far to seek. All anatomists were troubled at times with bodies returning to life as can be seen in the entry in the *Barber Surgeon's Annals* for 1587 regarding a revived corpse:

The 20 of Februarie, a strange thing happened a man hanged for felonie at Saint Thomas Wateringes, being begged by the Chirurgions of London, to have made of him an Anatomie, after hee was dead to

## A Declaration from Oxford, of Anne Green,

A young woman that was lately, and unjustly hanged in the Cattle-yard; but since recovered, her neck set strait, and her eyes fixed orderly and firmly in her head again: With her Speech touching four Angels that appeared to her when she was dead; and their strange expressions, apparitions, and passages that happened thereupon, the like never heard of before: Being a more full and perfect Relation of the great handiwork of God, to the said Anne Green, Servant to Sir Tho. Read, who being got with Child, and delivered of it in a house of Office, dead-born, received an unjust sentence to be hanged, and after half an hour, was cut down, and carried to the Colledge of Physicians, where all the learned Doctors and Chyrurgions met to anatomize her; but taking her out of the Coffin, and laying her on a Table, she began to stir; whereupon Dr. Perry & others, caused a warm bed to be prepared for her; and after 14. hours, she came to her self, uttering these words, *Behold Gods providence in raising me from death to life*: With an excellent Prayer used by her morning, noon, and night, fit to be read in all Families, throughout *England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales*: Whereunto is annexed another strange Wonder from *Albany in Darbyshire*, shewing how a young Woman dying in Child-bed, was buried, and delivered of a young Son in the grave, the strange things that befall thereupon, at the taking her out again.

*Licensed according to Order.*



all mens thinking, cut downe, stripped of his apparell, laide naked in a chest, throwne into a carre, and so brought from the place of execution through the Borough of Southwarke over the bridge and through the Citle of London to the Chirurgions Hall nere unto Cripelgate: The chest being there opened, and the weather extreeme cold hee was found to be alive, and lived till the three and twentie of February, and then died.<sup>47</sup>

Some broad-sheets cashed in on the public appetite for spectacle and superstition. A broad-sheet published in London by J. Clowes in 1651 with an illustration shows the popular curiosity regarding the subject of the revival of the anatomy subject. It relates the story of Anne Green, who revived under the hands of the anatomists after being judicially hung and is reproduced in Illustration 36. Such revivals on the anatomists' table made a good story and the mystical elements were emphasised and expanded on. While doctors still appeared as high priests of mysteries, people accepted stories like that of Anne Green and were anxious to vindicate these resurrections. Revivals were seen as an Act of God rather than mortal incompetence on the part of the hangman. If God saw fit to revive a person, then they must have been wrongfully condemned in the first place, and the authorities would be anxious to smooth-over anything which might undermine their authority and the law. In fact, the anatomist in these cases seems to undergo a change, being transformed from an instrument of justice to a beneficial saviour.

#### **4.e. Shylock's role as reluctant saviour**

This switch from avenging law enforcer to saviour is forced on Shylock with an additional twist. He has demanded the law and been prepared to cut into his victim in the position of an anatomist, with the legal justification which was also extended to the anatomists, when the tables are turned. The victim turns out to be alive and to be allowed to live. In this position, the anatomist was no more responsible, or eager, for the turn of events than Shylock, but whereas the anatomist's role changed to one of Saviour, Shylock himself becomes saved in Elizabethan eyes by being forced to convert to Christianity, but also by being, himself, allowed to live when the law could have demanded his life. Shylock had been given the chance of appearing as saviour by forgoing the bond, but having rejected that role, and finding himself in the position of having his victim restored to life, he is forced into giving up his rights to the body, as the anatomist must, or be declared a murderer. He then finds himself in the position of victim that he had intended for Antonio, while



37. William Hogarth, *The Reward of Cruelty*  
woodcut by J. Bell, 1750, engraving, 1 February 1751

Portia becomes the anatomist. Antonio, unlike Shylock, accepts the role of saviour, and by his hand, Shylock is returned not only to physical life, but also to, as Shakespeare's audiences would see it, life everlasting. His enforced conversion, so uncomfortable to modern audiences, would have been highly applauded by Elizabethans. Not only the victim, but the anatomist is redeemed.

What is interesting is that, for modern audiences, Shylock has attracted much of the sympathy that was extended to revived anatomy victims. It seems certain that Anne Green was, in fact, a murderess,<sup>48</sup> and yet her revival on the anatomy table elevated her to the status of, if not quite a martyr, at least an innocent victim. Shylock has often been seen as the victim of anti-Semitism, more sinned against than sinning, and yet it is clear that he fully intended to inflict grievous bodily harm upon Antonio. Audiences from the nineteenth century onwards, like the general public who read the notices of revived anatomy subject, have been reluctant to remember the malicious motivation behind the act which delivered the 'victim' into the hands of the law in the first place.

## 5. Anatomy and the Law

The fact that it is the law that has brought Antonio to this pass echoes the legal aspects of the anatomist's work. The kind of offence which Antonio is charged with may well have resulted in the death penalty, and with the only legally available bodies being those of hanged criminals the dissection of such became part of the punishment.

### 5.a. Dissection as punishment

In the eighteenth century the artist William Hogarth portrayed an anatomy in his *The Reward of Cruelty* [Illustration 37] (woodcut by J. Bell 1750, engraving 1 February 1751) and seems to have regarded dissection with a moral rather than scientific view. In this he was not alone: anatomies had a strong flavour of morality about them. Hogarth describes the scene as taking place in the Surgeon's Hall, but at the time it was still under construction - it was brought into use in August 1751 - and his theatre may have elements of several anatomy theatres.<sup>49</sup> In choosing to use a dissection rather than the more conventional hanging as the illustration of 'coming to a bad end' he shows the moral attitude to dissection which may reflect and be associated with the sentence of being hung, drawn and quartered which was still current. The fact that the only available bodies





38. Rembrandt van Rijn, anatomy paintings  
a. *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicholas Tulp* (1632)  
oil on canvas, 162,5 x 216,5 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague



b. *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. John Deyman* (1656)  
oil on canvas, 100 x 132 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

were those of hanged felons led to an association of judicial hanging with dissection and the belief that the anatomy was actually part of the condemned man's punishment. An eighteenth century Act of Parliament ordering that the bodies of hanged felons be made available for dissection was entitled 'An Act for the better preventing the horrid crime of Murder',<sup>50</sup> and as late as 1829, students in Edinburgh were enraged because, due to the large sale of tickets, they were excluded from 'the public and *punitive* dissection of William Burke'<sup>51</sup> (my italics) of Burke and Hare fame - a particularly apposite punishment in view of the fact that he was accused not only of 'resurrecting' dead bodies, but of murdering likely subjects in order to supply the anatomist Dr. Knox.

Heckscher states

The concept of retribution, the Old Testament idea of "an eye for an eye", the selective punishment of the limb that has sinned - this must be considered one of the constituent elements of the public anatomies ... Punitive dismemberments are documented from the Middle Ages down to the seventeenth century.<sup>52</sup>

There was a general belief that the felon's body was still open to sensation after being hanged, and would feel the agony of the dissection. Indeed, in some cases, criminals appear to have been more afraid of the post mortem dissection than the hanging itself! A moral and religious foundation to this view can be found in the belief that a criminal's soul (especially if he had committed murder) would not be released from the body, but would remain tied to it, and would therefore experience physical pain after death.<sup>53</sup>

#### 5.b. The cathartic element in anatomy and drama

This moral view of anatomy does not originate in the eighteenth century, however. Heckscher, discussing Rembrandt's depiction of anatomies [Illustration 38], comments that, while aware that contemporary views of anatomies were complex, involving the idea that a study of death would lead to a deeper understanding of life, physically, physiologically and morally, and realising that anatomists were keen to have their anatomies recorded as a means to immortality,

Rembrandt was certainly also aware of the *communis et vulgaris opinio* that saw in the public anatomy the crowning chapter of the punishment of a pathetic Everyman whose corpse was so callously displayed before the eyes of fascinated spectators, each one of whom felt dumbly or articulately, that he witnessed a cathartic ritual enacted for his own good.<sup>54</sup>

The cathartic element in drama has long been recognised and goes back to the Greek dramatists. It is usually associated with tragedy and the horror and fascination described by Heckscher can be related to this. Shakespeare's tragedies are undoubtedly cathartic, but his comedies also show an awareness of the need to exorcise emotions through viewing them in others. Comedy is, in many ways, a presentation of human folly. The audience becomes aware that the characters are engaged in actions which the spectator himself is capable of, and by making the foolishness obvious or exaggerated, the audience's embarrassment at their own potential folly is absorbed. Watching someone else make a fool of himself gives the audience a sense of superiority; viewing these antics dispassionately they are aware that such folly is comic, while, whether consciously or unconsciously, they realise that, given the circumstances, they may find themselves behaving identically.

This finds one of its strongest expressions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the audience watching the lovers laugh at the mechanicals' play have already laughed at the lovers themselves. Both mechanicals and lovers are totally unaware of the comedy they present, and in a thinking audience this should raise the question, is someone, somewhere, laughing at us? The application to oneself is not, of course, confined to laughter; in both tragedy and comedy, and in the public anatomy, there is a sense of 'there but for the grace of God, go I'. A broadsheet issued in Berne on 18 December, 1660 illustrated in Heckscher, advertised an anatomy 'Not out of a desire to vent malice upon the work of God but so that you may come to know yourself'.<sup>55</sup>

#### 6. Anatomy and martyrdom

Both anatomy theatres and playhouses could present the public with images which crossed the boundaries of human taboos. The anatomist revealed the secret places of the body by doing the otherwise impossible; laying open the human body to reveal the inner organs. The dramatist also explored forbidden areas, but in his case they were the emotions. In *The Merchant of Venice* the desire for vengeance is pushed to the extreme and the audience, conscious, perhaps, of the many times they have said or thought 'I could kill him' or 'I wish she were dead' is presented with a situation in which that thought is not only possible, but legally acceptable. Heckscher points out that storybooks and paintings depicting the torture of martyrs can be linked with anatomies





39. Dieric Bouts, *Justice of the Emperor Otto* (1474-5)  
Wood, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels

Even if we turn ... to a clumsy broadsheet, an Italian engraving of the late 1470s recording the ritual murder of the hapless little St. Simon of Trent, whose adroit dismemberment by his Jewish tormentors is shown in careful detail, we understand how much the representation of cruelty could, and in fact did, learn from surgery and vice versa ... all that had to be provided to turn a martyrdom into an anatomy was a change in emotional climate.<sup>56</sup>

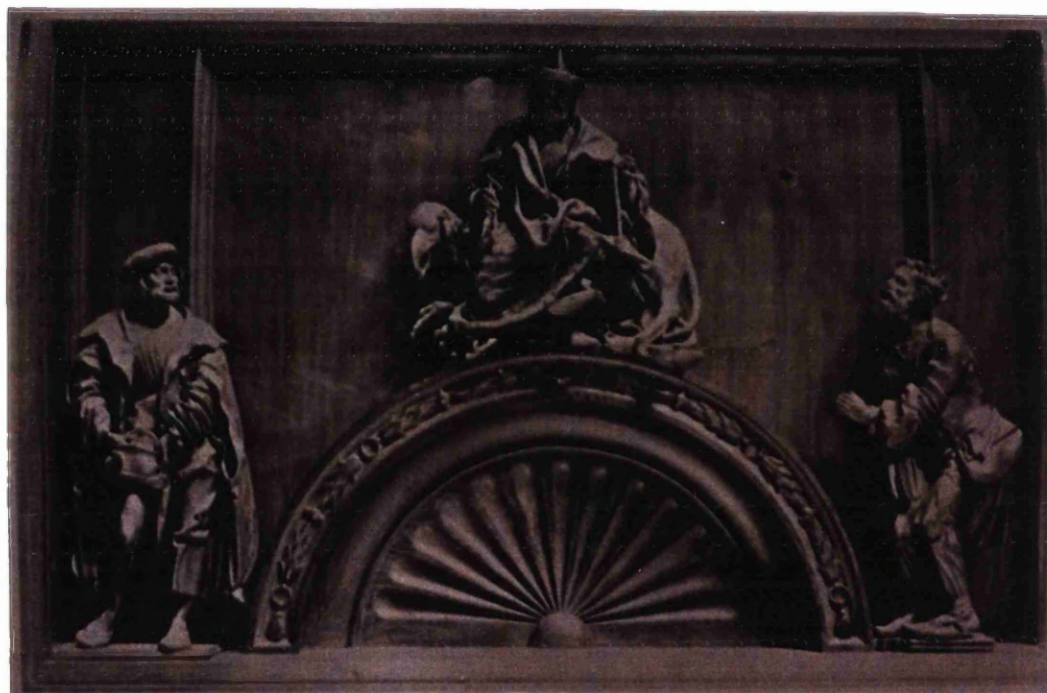
and while these martyrdom illustrations relate not only to surgery and anatomy, but also to cruelty and Judaism, and as such evoked one type of emotion, when the same kind of images were presented as the fruits of justice, the emotional reaction was dramatically changed:

The emotions of compassion and horror ordinarily evoked by the contemplation of the suffering saint could be transformed with a minimum of change into feelings of agreeable satisfaction if the victim were tortured in the name of Justice.<sup>57</sup>

An example of this can be seen in the *Justice of the Emperor Otto* panels, painted 1474-5 by Dieric Bouts [Illustration 39].<sup>58</sup>

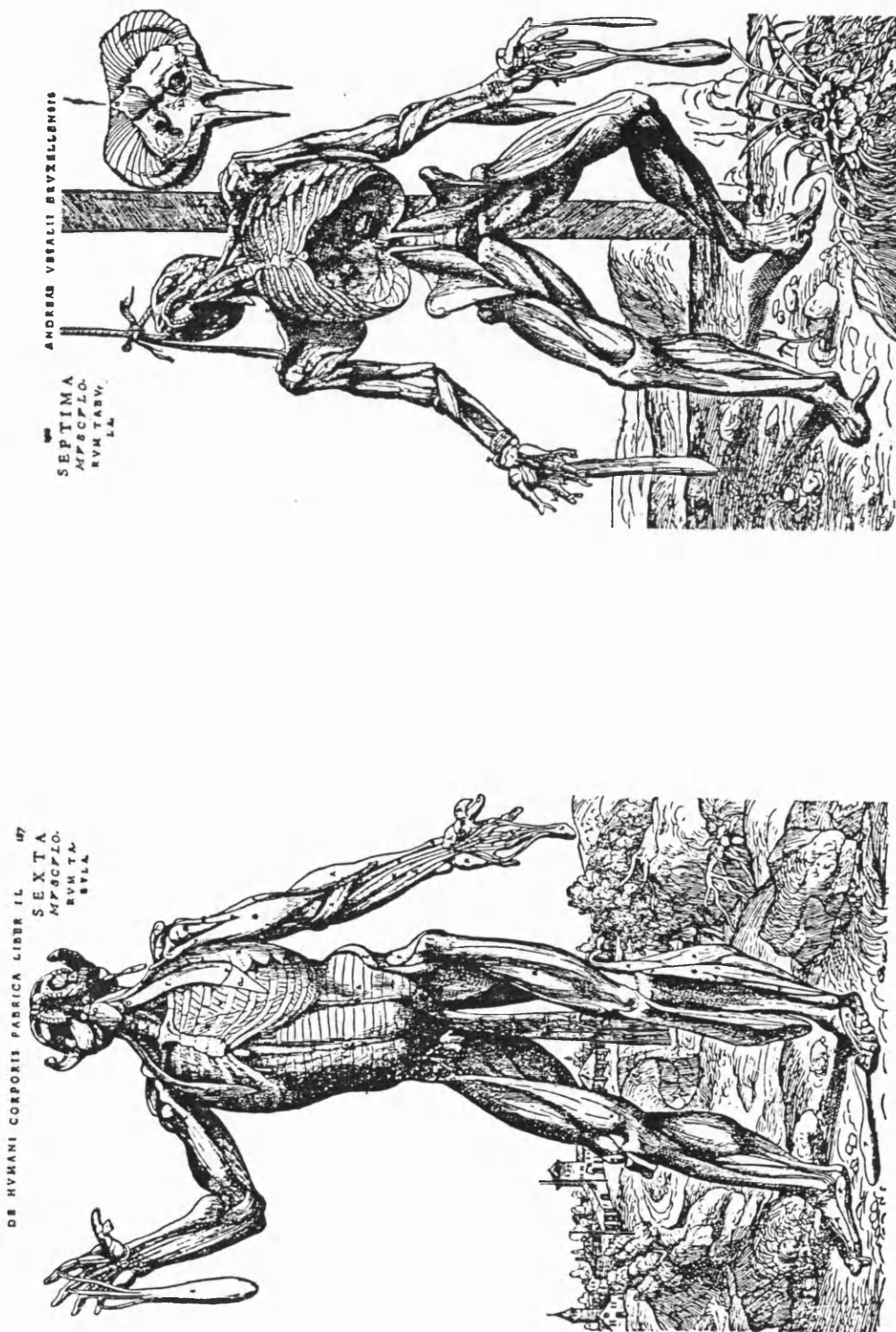
This may help to explain the ambivalent attitude towards Shylock that is apparent in both audience and critic, for both martyrdom and justice are involved in the trial scene. Antonio is presented as a long-suffering Christian; the epitome of all Christian virtues. His torture by Shylock is therefore a martyrdom. At the same time, Shylock is within his rights to demand Antonio's flesh. Justice and the Law are on his side, and there have always been both critics and spectators who feel that Shylock has been wronged. Ironically, this feeling is strengthened because Shylock is saved; had the play been a tragedy and Shylock been allowed to pursue his revenge as he wished, he would have been regarded almost universally as a villain quite as black as Richard III. Like Anne Green (see pp.163-4, 166 above) his survival has altered people's perception of him; they both become heroic, although the facts indicate that both are guilty of their crimes.

Shylock's desire to anatomize Antonio is punitive rather than self-questioning. He sees Antonio as deserving punishment for the 'crimes' he has committed against the Jew, and his revenge as just. Shylock's view of justice, however, is warped and it is his distorted and partial understanding of the concept which ultimately brings about his downfall. He regards it as his right to demand Antonio's life, and his motives are not those of blind, impartial justice, but of self-interest. Shylock's deformed sense of what is right is emphasised by the fact that he exhibits the traditional attributes of corrupt justice as seen on the wooden



40. Hans Leinberger, *Corrupt Justice* (c1515-20)  
linden wood, originally in the courthouse, Nuremberg, but now in the museum there





41. Vesalius, *Fabrica*, Anatomical illustrations  
 a. Sixth Muscle Tabula  
 b. Seventh Muscle Tabula



42. Hans Holbein, 'The Noble Lady', *The Dance of Death* (1523/4)

carvings of Hans Leinberger, c1515-20<sup>59</sup> [Illustration 40]. The traditional sword of Justice is replaced by a knife, symbol of treachery and the perfectly balanced scales by a swinging balance. The whole issue of justice, and the emblematic nature of these attributes will be dealt with fully in Chapter 6 below. The anatomist's tool becomes, in the hands of Shylock, not an instrument of justice, and enlightenment, but of vengeance and blindness.

## 7. Anatomy and the graphic arts

Hogarth's engraving, Rembrandt's paintings, Leonardo's anatomical studies (see pp.273-4 below), the martyrdom pictures and the crude woodcut illustrations of the broadsheets all point towards links between the graphic arts and anatomy. Many anatomical text books were illustrated, some, as in the case of Vesalius' works, with superb cuts, and the best of these illustrations take, not the form of simple, cold-blooded diagrams, but living and breathing people, gracefully exposing their innermost secrets to view, and elegant skeletons [Illustration 41] moving across the page in a parallel to Hans Holbein's *Dance of Death*, printed in Lyons in 1523/4 [Illustration 42]. Such illustrations give life to the bare text and often reveal more than the text explains,<sup>60</sup> in the same way that staging a play adds a third dimension to the two dimensional text. Gesture, pose, expression and movement add flesh to the bones of the words. In anatomical textbooks the illustrations take on an emblematic significance which appears overtly in the frontispieces. M. H. Spielmann sees the title page to Vesalius' *Fabrica* as 'emblematic from first to last'.<sup>61</sup> He sees in it a symbolic representation of the struggle between Vesalius' 'New Anatomy' and the older empirical school, and he discusses individual elements in this context, as do J. B. de C. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley.<sup>62</sup> Spielmann goes on to say

Lastly, the presence of the body before which Vesalius holds discourse, is emblematic like the rest. He speaks without book, consulting no text, inspired solely by knowledge and fortified by research, setting forth his exposition simply and clearly, showing things as they are - while the opened body of the woman, the subject of his talk, is significative of the source of life.<sup>63</sup>

In his *Epitome* Vesalius uses an Adam and Eve plate, an anatomical illustration but with the symbolic overtones of the Fall of Man. He omits the plate in the *Fabrica* but retains three skeletons which Leroy Crummer in an article on early fugitive sheets describes as being

so charged with the subconscious symbolism of the philosophy of death that it was recognized eighty-three years later by the genius





43. Engraved Title-page as used in 1545 and (with date added) 1553  
in Thomas Geminus' pirated version of the *Fabrica*

of that age who assimilated and transformed the idealism of these three figures into the graveyard scene of *Hamlet*.<sup>64</sup>

The title page of a pirated version of Vesalius by Thomas Geminus, [Illustration 43] printed with an English text by the playwright Nicholas Udall in 1533<sup>65</sup> is even more emblematic than Vesalius' original title page. It shows the figures of Justice on the left, blindfolded and holding a sword and scales, and Prudence on the right with a third personification, Victory, at the top. The strong links between Justice and dissection are here put into a graphic relationship. While the connections between Justice and anatomy are clear, another relationship, between 'showing' and 'telling' is evident in anatomies, in plays and in the emblematic devices and books which have already been discussed in the chapter on Emblems.

#### 8. Vivisection and the Jewish doctor

While anatomies were often seen in the light of judicial punishment, there were, however, at times, doubts about the anatomists themselves, and on occasion these surfaced in riots. Suspicions that the anatomists practised vivisection (which they undoubtedly did, although there is no evidence that human subjects were involved) created unrest. Vesalius and Thomas Gale, an anatomist working in the 1580s, took the accusations of human vivisection seriously enough to refute them in print. Because the surgeons and physicians were beyond attack, being protected by the crown and having established themselves as professions, the mob vented its feeling on the usual scapegoats - the Jews:

If the medical profession was comparatively safe, it was tempting to fasten such accusations on more or less defenceless minorities. Above all the Jews, already suspect of ritual murder, became prime targets once more, especially since some of the most successful surgeons and anatomists of the sixteenth century were Jews or of Jewish extraction.<sup>66</sup>

They were an understandable target, partly due to their prominence in the field of medicine, and partly as a result of a prejudice going back to the early Christian centuries which saw the Jews as not only the murderers of Christ, but of many innocent Christians, and such anti-Semitic stories often include a cannibal element.

In England the Marrano community, of supposedly converted Jews (Portuguese 'New Christians') had a high proportion of medical practitioners.<sup>67</sup> In Europe a large number of people, including Kings and the clergy, had Jewish



physicians during the Middle Ages, despite attempts by papal decree to prohibit them, and Jewish court physicians were often allowed to remain after a general expulsion, for example Marie de Medici's expulsion of the Jews from France in 1615 excluded her Jewish physician, Elijah de Montalto.<sup>68</sup> Even popes were known to have employed Jewish physicians, and, as Alan Edelstein points out

well after the peak of Jewish intellectualism, during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, a disproportionately high number of prominent physicians in Europe were of Marrano descent.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the respect that many of these Jewish doctors were held in, the ordinary Elizabethan would still have had grave doubts about physicians generally, doubts which would have been multiplied when related to the equally common prejudice against the Jews.

The Lopez affair has already been mentioned briefly (pp.60-61 above), and will be discussed in depth in section 2.a. of Chapter 5, but it should be pointed out here that the fact that Lopez was not only a Jew, but a physician and anatomist is significant. It is clear that Lopez's profession put him in a position to carry out what he was accused of, and although the animosity he aroused was because of his Jewish/foreign background, this may have been exacerbated by his position as an anatomist.

#### 9. **Avarice and the Elizabethan physician**

The association of the Jew with the physician/anatomist involves a further linkage with avarice, as both Jews and physicians were seen as being concerned solely with extracting money from their victims. Shakespeare follows a general tradition in making his physicians despised, money-grabbing and generally ignorant, (as do Ben Jonson, *Volpone*; John Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*; John Ford, *The Lover's Melancholy*; George Chapman, *All Fools* and *May Day*). References in contemporary drama to a college for surgeons/physicians indicates that both the Royal College of Physicians (founded 1518) and the Company of Barber-Surgeons (1540) were familiar to the man-in-the-street-Elizabethan.

In one play Shakespeare links the physician with the anatomist:

... one Pinch, a hungry lean-fac'd villain,  
A mere anatomy ...  
A living dead man

(*Comedy of Errors* V i 236-241)

Pinch is himself a doctor, trying to 'cure' Antipholus, but the latter in a neat twist, sees Pinch as the *victim* of the doctor, as the anatomy subject,

a shrivelled cadaver from which the flesh has fallen away. The implication might be the biblical 'Physition, heale thy selfe'.<sup>70</sup> As a 'living dead man' he brings to mind the anatomy subjects, all villains condemned to judicial hanging, who revived on the anatomy table. Pinch may not be a real villain, but he is portrayed as trying to heal a perfectly healthy, although confused, man, and as therefore not knowing his job. This attitude can be seen clearly in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, where he castigates the surgeons:

Many of them, to get a fee, will give Physick to every one that comes, when there is no cause ... stirre up a silent disease ... and to make a strong body weake ... often doth prolong and wierdraw his cure so long as there is any hope of pay.<sup>71</sup>

In the same work he refers to the 'hungry Surgeon' who he depicts as 'Harpy like to make a prey of his patient'<sup>72</sup> which can be related to Shylock's cannibalistic desire for Antonio's flesh. Both Shylock and Burton's surgeon are prepared to tear into living flesh for their own profit, and in both cases the hunger for gold is equated with the hunger for the flesh itself.

The belief that physicians and surgeons were concerned only with their fees was widespread, proof of which can be seen in the issuing in 1542 of an Act of Parliament to regulate the practice of Surgery which describes the Company and Fellowship of Surgeons of London as 'minding only their own lucre, and nothing the profit or ease of the diseased or patient'<sup>73</sup>

Shylock, while not a physician, exhibits the avarice commonly ascribed in the sixteenth century to that profession. John Earle satirizes the physician thus:

The best Cure he ha's done is upon his own purse, which from a leane sicknesse he hath made lusty, and in flesh.<sup>74</sup>

and his attitude to such leeches who fatten themselves up at the expense of society can be applied to Shylock. Earle goes on to castigate the surgeon:

... his gaines are very ill got; for he lives by the hurts of the Common-wealth<sup>75</sup>

and it is for this that Shylock is eventually judged, when he is condemned for his attempt to take the life of a Venetian citizen. Shylock's greed is finally punished, as Hugh Latimer says that of the physicians will be:

But now in our dayes physicke is a remedie prepared onely for rich folkes, and not for poore; for the poore man is not able to wage the Phisition: God indeede hath made Phisick for rich and poore, but Phisitions in our time seeke onely their owne profits, how to gette

mony, not how they might doe good unto their poore neighbour. Whereby it appeareth, that they bee for the most part without charitie; and so consequently, not the children of God: and no doubt but the heavy judgement of God hangeth over their heades, for they are commonly very wealthy, and ready to purchase lands; but to helpe their neighbour, that they cannot do, but God will find them out one day, I doubt not.<sup>76</sup>

The avarice of the physicians makes them as non-Christian as Shylock.

#### 10. Anatomy as a physiological tool

The Elizabethans held the theory that the organs and the emotions were related. This was not by any means a new idea but can be traced back to Galen and Aristotle. The theory of the three spirits, natural, vital and animal, and the belief that each organ had a specific function, predestined at man's creation,<sup>77</sup> created a rigid structure within which medical research was confined. Until scientists and doctors were prepared to break out of these confines, new theories regarding the way the body worked were stifled.

This reasoning should be borne in mind when regarding the public anatomies. The revelations in the cutting open of the body were not simply concerned with the biological facts, but could also be seen as a search for the motivating forces of the character, temperament and reason. This can be seen in another direct Shakespearean reference to anatomy from *Romeo and Juliet*

In what vile part of this anatomy  
Doth my name lodge?

(*Romeo and Juliet* III iii 106-107)

Romeo sees his name, his character, his essence, as being fixed in a tangible part of his body. Dissecting the heart, for instance, also cut into the seat of the emotions and therefore into the emotions themselves. To the Elizabethans dissecting the body and dissecting the mind were one and the same. Anatomy and psychology were inextricably linked.

The difference between the attitude of an Elizabethan and a modern doctor can be shown with an illustration. The modern doctor sees the body as being like a car engine - a machine which will perform well within certain parameters and conditions. It must not be too cold or too hot and must be kept supplied with fuel. In this state it will function automatically and uniformly. The Elizabethan doctor regarded the body more as a team of horses. They too have to be kept within certain temperatures and fed regularly, but each horse has its own temperament and character and will

react differently to various circumstances. Together they form a team, but they are alive in their own right and are therefore unpredictable.

#### 10.a. The heart - *King Lear*

In one of his direct references to anatomy, Shakespeare has Lear say

Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?

(*King Lear* III vi 75)

This speech reveals the Elizabethan concept of the body: that the organs of the body were not solely, or even primarily, simply physical machinery. Each organ had a physiological reason for being, and affected directly temperament and character. Lear's demand for an anatomy to be performed on Regan touches one of the key organs of the body - the heart. Berengarius da Carpi writes in *Isagogae Breves*:

'Concerning the Heart'

For the dignity of the heart prevails over other parts since it is the chief of all the members and is called the sun of the microcosm because it illuminates the other members with its spirit.<sup>78</sup>

The heart was considered to be the centre and seat of life, and regarded not as a mechanical pump but as a place where the animal heat was impregnated into the elements entering from the venous system and lungs. This was where the natural spirits from the liver were refined into vital spirits.<sup>79</sup> P. De La Primaudaye said in 1618 that the hot red arterial blood was for bringing 'naturall heate to the other members, and to give them vertue and strength to put in practice those actions and offices, which exercise the same heate.'<sup>80</sup> The heart was considered to be the chief instrument of the soul and therefore the seat of affections, emotions and source of all perturbations of the soul. The appropriateness of Lear's demands to bare Regan's *heart* can therefore be seen, as it is her natural affections and emotions which seem to Lear to be warped. In the light of this view of the heart, Shylock's designs on Antonio take on a much deeper and more chilling aspect. Shylock does not simply wish to kill Antonio; he wants to destroy his innermost spirit and motivating force, not only flesh, but soul.

#### 10.b. The liver - *Twelfth Night*

In another play Shakespeare makes reference to another part of the body in terms of anatomy:

For Andrew, if he were open'd and you find so much blood in his liver as will clog the foot of a flea, I'll eat the rest of th'anatomy.

(*Twelfth Night* III ii 58)

10.c.      **The four Humours**

Phlegm/Phlegmatic	- water	- rest and sloth
Black bile/Melancholy	- earth	- heavy look and a spirit little daring
Blood/Sanguine	- air	- mirth and music, wine and women
Yellow bile/Choleric	- fire	- violent, fierce and full of fire <sup>a2</sup>

(Shylock)  
CHOLERIC  
Yellow Bile  
*Fire*

Hot      Dry

(Bassanio)      SANGUINE      MELANCHOLY      (Antonio)  
Blood      Black Bile  
*Air*      *Earth*

Wet      Cold

PHLEGMATIC  
Phlegm  
*Water*  
(Portia)

I would like to suggest that in the quartet of Shylock, Antonio, Portia and Bassanio we find that each individually shows a predominance in one of the humours. Shylock is choleric, Antonio, melancholic, Portia is phlegmatic and Bassanio sanguine.

Antonio is seen from the beginning as a melancholic. This mood can be seen as a natural inclination to that humour for he himself denies any reason for being melancholy. His later reactions in the court scene reveal a resignation to his situation which he has no spirit to fight. Portia is initially seen as 'weary'. She is perilously close to sloth in her first scene but later she can be identified with Belmont, which takes up her more positive quality of rest and peace. When she leaves Belmont, she becomes more purposeful, but she is the instrument by which rest and peace are finally brought about.

It is perhaps no coincidence that Bassanio has to cross Portia's element, water, to obtain her. Shakespeare associates other heroines with water: Miranda is surrounded by water; Perdita is sent across the sea as a baby, and found on the shore by the shepherds; Marina is born at sea; Viola arrives in Illyria as the victim of a shipwreck.<sup>64</sup> Water is seen as an element which both separates and unites. In each case the sea divides: Ferdinand from his father and companions, and Miranda from the rest of civilization, Perdita and Marina from their parents, and Viola from her brother. In these plays, ultimately, the sea is also the means by which characters are united, but in *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare adds a slight twist by reversing the order. Bassanio is *first* united with Portia, having crossed the sea to reach her, but is *then* separated from her by the news that Antonio's ships have been lost, and he must hurry back to Venice. The restorative aspect of the sea is recalled at the end of the play, when Portia, united again with Bassanio in Belmont, announces that three of Antonio's argosies have arrived safely in harbour, and he is therefore reunited, to some extent, with his wealth.

Bassanio exhibits the sanguine attitude in his enthusiasm and joy for living, and it is significant that it is his humour, blood, which is ultimately the saviour of his friend. Shylock is undoubtedly choleric, and becomes more so as the play progresses. Whereas Bassanio and Portia become more balanced in their humours, Shylock and Antonio become less so. Antonio becomes more melancholic and hopeless, and Shylock more irrational

and angry. At the end of the play, the four main character have resolved into a united pair, Bassanio and Portia, and a pair in contrast, Shylock and Antonio. Shylock leaves the trial scene broken and resigned, but essentially alone, while Antonio, having passed through his period of resignation and emerged with some part of his wealth restored, has also lost the close friendship of Bassanio, and, like Shylock, ends the play in emotional isolation.

By relating the character to the diagram above, it can be seen that Portia and Shylock form opposites as do Bassanio and Antonio. The opposition of the first pair is obvious, but not so the second pair. Bassanio and Antonio are seen as very close friends but their spiritual development depends on their being split apart. Such a friendship, although valid in moderation, is seen in obsessive intensity as infertile and stagnant. This unhealthy closeness must be superceded by the more natural relationship between Portia and Bassanio, a relationship which can grow and become fertile.

## Chapter 5

### THE JEW: ALIEN AND USURER

#### 1. Shakespeare and anti-Semitism

Criticism of *The Merchant of Venice* has largely been restricted to two themes, Shylock and the caskets. Commentary on Shylock shows extreme variations of response to his character. Critics either see him as a thoroughgoing villain or a martyr, more sinned against than sinning. The tendency of late twentieth century criticism has been towards the latter, perhaps because of the extreme sensitivity towards anti-Semitism of the post-war society. Shakespeare has been cast as a violent anti-Semite or a sympathiser, but little attempt has been made to see his portrait of Shylock in a disinterested manner; critics have tended to foist their own sympathies on the playwright, and to impose twentieth century considerations on a play which needs to be seen in its historical context.<sup>1</sup>

Modern critics in labelling Shakespeare anti-Semitic are reacting in a twentieth century way. In the sixteenth century the term did not exist. England was a chauvinistic rather than a cosmopolitan country and other 'foreign' elements came in for as much, if not more criticism and antagonism than the Jews. The violently anti-Catholic sentiments expressed at the time, and later, do not arouse in the modern critic the emotional response that the anti-Semitic expressions do, and yet the two should be seen in the same light. Elizabethan Protestants considered both anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic sentiments to be morally correct and righteous, but twentieth century critics find it difficult to be disinterested and detached when dealing with the latter owing to the emotionally charged subject, accentuated by the horrors of the Second World War holocaust, and the increasingly sensitive climate towards all matters which impinge on racial discrimination.

D. M. Cohen thinks *The Merchant of Venice* is

profoundly and crudely anti-Semitic ... Although few writers on the subject are prepared to concede as much, it is quite possible that Shakespeare didn't give a damn about Jews or about insulting England's minuscule Jewish community, and that, if he did finally humanize his Jew, he did so simply to enrich his drama.<sup>2</sup>

and later he says

It is as though *The Merchant of Venice* is an anti-Semitic play written by an author who is not an anti-Semite - but an author who



has been willing to use the cruel stereotypes of the ideology for mercenary and artistic purposes.<sup>3</sup>

While not personally condoning anti-Semitism in any form, I think it is quite probable that Shakespeare *didn't* give a damn about a possibly non-existent community. Shakespeare was a commercial playwright; his plays had to appeal to the general public in order to earn him his livelihood, and although his dramatic instincts demanded that he make his characters fully rounded and not simply crude stereotypes, he was bound by the social and moral conventions of his time. He sets up for ridicule the popularly unpopular Spaniard in the person of Arragon and, more expansively, in Don Armado in *Love's Labours Lost*. His 'working class' characters - the mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Dogberry and the watch in *Much Ado About Nothing* - are comic, bumbling, ignorant innocents, but no one has ever accused Shakespeare of being a snob! Why should he not use the ready made character of the Jew, related as it was in the public mind to usury, hard-heartedness and avarice, for his Shylock? The fact that Shakespeare digs deeper into the psychological motivations of his characters than his contemporaries is not evidence of either anti- or philo-Semitism; it is his genius, and the reason why his play stands the test of time so well as opposed to, for instance, Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. Barabas is a stereotype in every way, but Shakespeare feels impelled, while utilising the stereotype, to humanize Shylock, and it is the depth of texture which this gives that makes the character so complex and so memorable. Cohen comments

Until the court scene, Shylock remains a readily understood and easily identified villain. His dominant characteristics are the negative qualities normally associated with vice figures. Sympathy for him before the reversal therefore does violence to the dramatic purpose of the play. Completely in the ascendancy, he has power and the law itself on his side. When sympathy finally becomes right and proper, it transcends the narrow bounds of religion and stereotype. When finally we are made to pity Shylock, we do not pity a wrongfully persecuted member of an oppressed minority. Instead we pity a justly condemned and justly punished villain.<sup>4</sup>

As Toby Lelyveld has said:

Had he [Shylock] been a loving father, Jessica would not have deserted him. *We are moved by a sense of pity for Shylock only because it is we who are compassionate and not because of any virtue in Shylock's disposition.*<sup>5</sup> (my italics)

## 2. The Jews in England

It seems likely that Shakespeare had never met a Jew. On July 18, 1290 Edward I ordered all Jews to leave England before All Saints Day of that year and this was followed up by a further expulsion order issued by Edward III in 1358.<sup>6</sup> Earlier, in 1232 Henry III had founded a house for Jews converted to Christianity, the *Domus Conversorum*, but it seems to have been little used: between 1232-1290 it had not more than one hundred inmates, despite ecclesiastical backing and a monetary allowance, and from 1331-1608 only a total of forty-eight people were admitted.<sup>7</sup> There is evidence that when Jewish communities actually lived in England, there was some sympathy and friendship towards them. An incident in 1286 shows the contradictory reactions of the burghers and the church: Bishop Swinfield of Hereford, hearing that Christians had been invited to the wedding of a wealthy Jewish financier's daughter, prohibited them from attending and threatened excommunication on any who did. Nevertheless, the Christian guests did attend.<sup>8</sup> This indicates that despite prohibitions on the part of both Christian and Jewish religious leaders, there was considerable social and cultural mixing between the two races, as well as business dealings.

However, with expulsion and the removal of Princely protection, the way was open for the church to encourage anti-Semitic feeling without danger of actual contact proving their accusations unfounded. On the continent, where Jews still lived, both the nobility and the papacy protected Jewish persons and rights, but anti-Semitic feeling was strong in the uneducated classes, and was whipped up by the lesser clergy, particularly the friars. Throughout Europe anti-Semitism found its strongest followers among the peasant classes, who were putty in the hands of unscrupulous clergy and could be formed into violent, unruly mobs.

There is some argument as to whether any Jews at all lived in England up to the time they were readmitted by Cromwell in 1655, or whether there was a small secret Jewish community in the sixteenth century. What is certain is that there were no *official* Jews living in England. As we saw above (p.177) there is evidence of a group of Jewish Portugese refugees (the Marrano community) who professed conversion to Christianity.<sup>9</sup> They numbered among at least thirty-seven householders several well reputed physicians, a profession in which the Jews had some standing.

## 2.a. Lopez

One of these was the Dr. Roderigo Lopez (see above, pp.60-61, 177-8), who, as has already been mentioned, has been put forward by many critics as a source for Shylock. Gratiano's words in IV i 133-134:

... Thy currish spirit  
Govern'd a **wolf** who, hang'd for human slaughter ...

have been cited as proof that Shakespeare had in mind the affair of Dr. Lopez. This unfortunate man was a Portugese 'New Christian', a physician who qualified in Portugal then settled in London and became a member of the College of Physicians, delivering their annual anatomical lecture in 1569. He became the medical attendant first to the Earl of Leicester and then, in 1586, to the Queen, but his position encouraged him to political intrigue and with the support of Essex he tried to secure English backing on behalf of Dom Antonio, a pretender to the Portugese throne (and himself of Jewish blood). When Dom Antonio was brought to England Lopez accompanied him everywhere as his interpreter and secretary, but they quarrelled after 1589 and the failure of Drake's expedition to Portugal, and Lopez began to favour an agreement with Spain. He thus came up against Essex and the war party, who in any case resented his easy access to the Queen. Spain secretly offered him a hefty bribe to assassinate Dom Antonio, which he did not reject outright, although there is no evidence that he really intended to carry out the assassination. In October 1593 he was arrested and accused of plotting to poison the Queen for Spain. The trial dragged on for months, with Sir Robert Cecil championing him, Essex, who was a friend of Shakespeare's patron Southampton, accusing him, and the Queen unconvinced. Eventually he was found guilty and was executed at Tyburn on 7 June, 1594. Lopez seems to have been, although attracted to plotting and intrigue, essentially innocent of the charge made against him. His trial and execution did, however, whip up a storm of anti-Semitic feeling.<sup>10</sup>

The name Lopez (wolf), the date, and the Jewish connection have encouraged critics to link the event with Shylock. It is possible that Southampton requested an anti-Semitic play from Shakespeare because of his friendship with Essex, but this seems unlikely. The trial, however, initiated an interest in plays with Jewish characters, especially villains, and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* played during the week of the execution.<sup>11</sup> However, as the wolf was commonly used as a representation of avarice and usury, the likelihood of Gratiano's speech referring to Lopez is weakened and Bernard

Grebanier says it refers to the custom of hanging real wolves for sheep stealing.<sup>12</sup>

The storm of feeling which followed the Lopez trial and execution, even if it is not a direct source for Shylock, does indicate that there was a good deal of anti-Jewish feeling in England at the time. The fact that no Jews were openly living in England at the time may have something to do with the presentation of the Jew as a devil. Englishmen had no real Jews with which to compare received prejudices and as a consequence the Jew assumed the character of a mythical 'bogey-man', a reaction which human gullibility and fear of the unknown allows only too easily.<sup>13</sup> M. Holmes states that in Shakespeare's day 'the race had become unfamiliar and exotic' and it was therefore possible 'to believe anything of it without any particular ill-feeling'.<sup>14</sup> While agreeing with the first part of his statement, it seems clear that to a large proportion of the population in England, the Jew presented a subject which could be accused of every evil and hated generally with the blessing of the church.

### 3. The Jewish stereotype in England

According to Alan Edelstein, in all countries Jews were obliged to wear distinguishing badges which

stigmatized Jews, enhanced differences between them and Gentiles, and presented barriers to social intercourse between the two groups. The Jew became officially different. When ... the physical stigma was discarded in most countries, the Jew as different was an established part of European culture. One clear indication of this is the Jewish stereotype. Stereotypes continue to set the Jew apart and contribute to his being perceived as different.<sup>15</sup>

The Jewish stereotype as perceived in England had its origins in various places. The popular conception of Jews as devils stems from the Bible, where Christ denounces them for their refusal to believe in Him and their attempts to kill Him:

Ye are of your father the devill, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he hath bene a murtherer from the beginning (John, 8. 44)

The position of the Jews as the murderers of Christ spawned other beliefs: that their blood was black and putrid and that they had a disgusting stench,<sup>16</sup> that the Jews were blasphemers, and that they indulged in ritual murder of Christians.

### 3.a. Blasphemy

The accusation of blasphemy was made by Luther, along with hardness of heart. Jews were believed to rail against Christ three times a day in their prayers and at the resettlement of the Jews in England in 1665 the notion was evidently still current because the Council made special recommendations to restrain them.<sup>17</sup> Shakespeare refers to the accusation of blasphemy in *Macbeth*, although it is inserted in a list of improbable ingredients for the witches' cauldron:

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
Witch's mummy, maw and gulf  
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,  
Root of hemlock digg'd i' th' dark,  
Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
Gall of goat, and slips of yew ...

(IV i 22-27)

### 3.b. Hardness of heart

Hardness of heart is referred to in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* when Launce complains of his dog's indifference:

He is a stone, a very pebble stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog. A Jew would have wept to have seen our parting; why, my grandam having no eyes, look you, wept herself blind at my parting.

(II iii 12-17)

### 3.c. Ritual murder

The accusation of ritual murder incurred perhaps the strongest anti-Semitic feelings and has a long history, but no solid foundation. England was apparently the first country to make this accusation when, in 1144 at Norwich, the dead body of William, a skinner's apprentice was found on Easter eve. He probably died of natural causes, but the Jews were accused of crucifying him on the second day of Passover. A wave of religious outrage spread through the community, and the Jews were allowed to take refuge in the castle by the Sheriff, and were thus protected, although one of the Jewish leaders who slipped out was murdered. William's body was hailed as that of a martyr and he was buried in the Cathedral as a saint, William of Norwich, and was credited with various miracles.<sup>18</sup> This pattern was followed in other parts of the country and by the time of the expulsion the land was littered with boy martyrs, supposedly murdered by the Jews. Perhaps the most famous of these alleged ritual murders was that of Hugh of Lincoln in late August 1255, after which nearly one hundred Jews were arrested and taken to London for trial. Eighteen refused to submit to the all Christian jury, demanding a mixed jury, and were promptly hanged. Cecil Roth says

The legend entered into the folk-lore of the English people: it was cited and imitated by Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales*: it formed the inspiration of many ballads, in English, in French, and in Scots, which were handed down for centuries in the mouths of the peasantry. Thus, in after generations, when no Jew was left in England, it was from the poetical descriptions of this half-legendary event that a large part of the population received its impressions of the despised race.<sup>19</sup>

The accusations of ritual murder often included accusations of cannibalism, and this was to remain an acceptable element in drama and literature which depicted Jews for a considerable time. John Day's *Travels of Three English Brothers* of 1607 contains the statement by the Jew Zariph:

Now by my soule 'twould my spirits much refresh  
To tast a banket all of Christian's flesh and  
Sweet gold, sweete Iewell! but the sweetest part  
Of a Iewes feast is a Christian's heart.<sup>20</sup>

Shylock's desire to 'feed' his revenge may refer obliquely to this tradition, as E. E. Stoll suggests, but it is interesting that the idea of feasting on a Christian heart is linked with gold and jewels in Zariph's mind, although this may, of course, be an influence from *The Merchant of Venice* itself, or the earlier *Jew of Malta*.

#### 4. The treatment of Jews

Jews were considered by many to deserve the worst treatment that could be meted out to them. Thomas Aquinas stated 'They are doomed to perpetual servitude, and the lords of the earth may use their goods as their own'.<sup>21</sup> Robert South, a highly successful preacher speaking in England one hundred years after Shakespeare's death said of them

And at this very day, how much are they disgusted in all those kingdoms and dominions where they are dispersed! They are like dung upon the face of the earth; and that not so much for their being scattered, as for being so offensive.<sup>22</sup>

Alexander Barclay puts the Jews at the head of his group of 'straunge fooles and infidels':

The cursed Jewes despising Christes lore,  
For their obstinate and unrightwise crueltie  
Of all these fooles must neede be set before.<sup>23</sup>

Antonio's alleged action in spitting on Shylock would have been regarded as his right. In 1381 in a letter to the Royal Archives, Jehan La Barbe was outraged 'having been spit upon in the face, was moved to wrath at the outrage, seeing that he was no Jew, in whose face it was proper to spit'<sup>24</sup> and in the Eastern Church spitting at the devil was part of the ritual of

baptism. It was interesting to observe that in the 1987 production of *The Merchant of Venice* at Stratford emphasis was laid on spitting, and the gesture was repeated several times during the play, not only by Antonio but also by Salerio, Solanio and Gratiano, and in a reversal during the trial scene, by Shylock himself. Contrary to what might have been expected, these repeated expectorations raised, not a howl of protest at the anti-Semitism, but a laugh.

##### 5. The Jew as outcast

In England, the Jew developed into a stereotype which combined devil with fool. The comic view of the Jew was also found on the continent where in the Italian *carri* or *giudate* they were the butt of jokes, mocked, abused and often ill-treated, being eventually hanged, strangled, impaled and burnt. Audiences of the medieval Miracle plays were treated to comic visions of Jewish villains e.g. in the York Plays where Judas, dressed as a Jew, is refused admittance to Pilate's palace on sight.<sup>25</sup> The Judas of the Miracle plays, red bearded and red haired was the arch-traitor and became identified with Judaism (illogically because the Disciples were also Jews, as was Christ himself). When his effigy was hanged or burnt it was *Judaism* that was being punished.<sup>26</sup> In addition, as Hermann Sinsheimer points out

The Jew was a stranger and clung to a strange faith. He was a wanderer without honour which accrues from agriculture and craftsmanship, without the reliability lent by a settled residence, without the grace which only the Church could dispense.<sup>27</sup>

The myth of the Wandering Jew seems to have originated in England in the thirteenth century when Roger of Wendover, a monk of the Abbey of St. Albans, published in his *Flores Historiarum* (1235) the rather dubious story told by an Armenian bishop (also of doubtful character) of Cartaphilus, the gate keeper to Pontius Pilate, who was cursed with eternal life by Christ for his ill-treatment of Him.<sup>28</sup> The story spread throughout the continent, and after a hiatus was revived in Germany in the sixteenth century in slightly changed form; Cartaphilus had become Ahasver or Ahasuerus, the cobbler who refused to allow Christ to rest outside his shop in his walk to Calvary, and was cursed with eternal restlessness.<sup>29</sup> It is significant that in the English version the myth has what was then considered to be a happy ending; the Wandering Jew converted to Christianity and in casting off Judaism, cast off the curse. Critics have argued about the effect of Shylock's forced conversion, but there can be little doubt that to the general populace it was a satisfactory conclusion.

Forced conversions were practised throughout Europe, although several Popes, in their role as Jewish protectors, forbade them. In many cases the Jew was offered the choice of death or baptism; some accepted death, some baptism and many simply fled to a currently more sympathetic area.

The combination of villain and butt, tragedy and comedy, was an accepted depiction of the Jew to Elizabethans. An old actor Thomas Jordan produced a song in 1664 which was obviously based on *The Merchant of Venice*, although none of the characters are named. He describes the Shylock character:

His beard was red, his face was made  
Not much unlike a Witches;  
His habit was a Jewish Gown,  
That would defend all weather;  
His chin turn'd up, his nose hung down,  
And both ends met together.<sup>30</sup>

Whether this is how Shakespeare's Shylock was portrayed on stage is impossible now to determine. Shakespeare shows some sensitivity towards Shylock as a character, he is not the simple stock 'cardboard cutout' figure of the Jew, but he is undoubtedly intended to be both villain and comic character. Shakespeare was influenced in his portrayal of Shylock not by real knowledge of the Jews or their way of life, but by the medieval stereotype which was passed down in England as being representative of the Jews.

#### 6. The Jew in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century drama

Discounting the numerous biblical and religious plays which feature Jews as part of Old and New Testament stories, there are only a handful of contemporary plays extant which feature Jewish characters. The earliest of these is *Three Ladies of London* (1584), by Robert Wilson which features Gerontus, a Jew who proves to be more honourable than the Christian merchant of the play. The next play is, apart from *The Merchant of Venice*, the most famous portrayal of a wicked Jew and obviously had some influence on Shakespeare's play; Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (1588). Barabas, like Shylock, has a daughter who leaves him for the Christian world, he too is a grasping manipulator with a hatred for Christians. *Selimus* (1594) by Robert Greene contains the character Abraham, a Jew who poisons Selimus' father at the instigation of his son. Following *The Merchant of Venice*, four more plays with Jewish characters appeared: *Machiavellus* (1597), an anonymous Latin manuscript; *Travailes of the brothers Sherley*



(1607), by John Day, William Rowley and G. Wilkins; *A Christian turn'd Turk* (1622), by Fletcher (and possibly Beaumont); and *The Raging Turk* (1627), by Thomas Goffe. In addition to these there is evidence of three lost plays; *The Jewe*, a play performed at The Bull Theatre which is mentioned by Stephen Gosson in *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579) where he exempts it from his attack on plays as corrupting influences on the public because it exhibited 'the greedinesse of worldly chusers, and bloody mindes of Usurers',<sup>31</sup> a play by Decker, *The Jew of Venice* (1653) and a play of which the original German text is extant, but the English version is now lost and which must be dated about 1608.

Of all the above plays cited only *The Jew of Malta* has a Jew as the principal character. Barabas exhibits the stock characteristics of the earlier stage Judas; hatred, bloodthirstyness, and lack of conscience. There can be no doubt that Shakespeare used him as a basic model for Shylock, but Shakespeare's creation emerges as a more complex and three-dimensional character, although still revealing some of the stereotyped emotions and reactions of the English stage Jew.

What is more significant is that all of these plays place their Jewish characters in foreign countries, even, as in the case of *Three Ladies of London*, "teleporting" a character into an exotic location in order to meet a Jew. Jacob Lopes Cardozo cites this as evidence that there were no Jews at all living in England at the time, either semi-openly or secretly. The settings of these Jewish scenes show an awareness of the position of Jews on the continent; two (and probably three) are set in Turkey<sup>32</sup> where many Jews had emigrated, and been welcomed, when pogroms in Spain and Portugal had made those countries unbearable. The Turkish Jews traded extensively with Italy and particularly with Venice, where a strong Jewish community thrived, and where a further three plays are set.<sup>33</sup> The remaining locations, Malta, Florence<sup>34</sup> and Lisbon<sup>35</sup> were all known to have had Jewish communities. These foreign settings, and in particular Italy, were popular in the romantic drama and in addition, Italy, as

the favourite foreign country [for dramatic settings] was also the most important abode of Jews in the 16th century. The bloody-minded, crafty, extortionate Jew was therefore among the few exotic devices available to produce the foreign atmosphere; and he was just that sort of half-known figure that tempts marvelling curiosity.<sup>36</sup>

## 7. Shylock as an alien

## 7.a. The English view of foreigners

The fact that personal knowledge of the Jew was impossible in England led to the transformation of a real group of people into a fairy-tale race whose strangeness and mysterious rites set them apart from the average Englishman. Shakespeare's concern in painting Shylock is with his *alienness* as much as with his Jewishness, and the latter is only a vehicle for the former. Many Jewish critics have pointed out that Shylock is *not* characteristic of Jewish life: for one thing the close, affectionate family bonding is absent, but his main characteristic is his difference to the rest of the Venetian community. While there were officially no Jews in England during Shakespeare's period, there were communities of foreigners against whom feelings ran very high. England, due to its island geography, has always been insular and removed from her European neighbours.<sup>37</sup> Anti-alien riots against Dutch and French Protestant refugees erupted in 1588, and again in 1593 when a group of apprentices attacked a foreigners' market in Southwark, forcing the stall-holders to sell them butter for 3d. instead of the normal 5d. per pound. This may relate to Launcelot's fears that Jessica's conversion, and the subsequent increase in the population, would raise the price of pork. Lorenzo's rather confusing reference to the negro cook can be explained as a retort to Launcelot that he is himself increasing the alien population by getting a foreigner with child.<sup>38</sup> These disturbances culminated in 1595 when a wave of feeling caused such severe riots that the authorities were obliged to hang five of the rioting apprentices.<sup>39</sup> The theatres, usually mouthpieces for contemporary events, were unusually quiet about these events, perhaps at the instigation of the authorities, but after the 1595 riot, silence was no longer possible (or enforcible). However, the subject remained both sensitive and volatile.

Foreigners had been for a long time the object of grievances: a sermon by Dr Beale or Bell states:

ffor so it is ... that aliens and straungers eate the bread from the fatherless children, and take the living from all artificers and the entercourse from all merchants: whereby povertie is so much encreased, that every man bewayleth the miserie of other.<sup>40</sup>

A census taken some fifty years later in 1567 in the parish of St. Katherines, where most of the refugees settled, lists 2030 Dutch, 428 French, 140 Italians, 45 Spanish and Portugese, 44 Burgundians and 45 Scots! By 1580 the 'French', who were more probably Flemish-French and

Picards, had increased to 1838.<sup>41</sup> Andrew Tretiak sees *The Merchant of Venice* as Shakespeare's response to the anti-alien question; he argues that Shakespeare is trying to get the Elizabethan public to see that xenophobia in any form is destructive, and that his play is both a petition for mercy to Elizabeth and a request to the French and Dutch Protestant refugees to

seek a sort of *modus vivendi* with the original citizens ... [and Shylock's conversion] was meant by Shakespeare only as an allegorical expression of the necessity of changing the national attitude on the part of the foreign residents in England.<sup>42</sup>

forcing them to live with and as English citizens. He puts forward in evidence Shylock's relation to social and political conditions in Venice<sup>43</sup> (Shylock is a stranger, but has the privileges of a citizen) and argues that because there were no Jews in England at the time, the Master of Revels could not object to a play concerning their status, whereas a play relating to French/Dutch Huguenots could have been, in the contemporary climate of opinion, highly inflammatory. Certainly there is plenty of evidence to link Puritanism with Judaism; the Puritans came closer to Jewish beliefs than any other Christian sect by their emphasis on the Old Testament and their return to its teaching as a pattern for life. Shylock's 'I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you' (I iii 32-33) applied equally to the alien Protestants who lived in Elizabethan London. Tretiak states that Shakespeare saw the answer to the problem in a merging of the two communities by intermarriage and goes on to detail elements in the play which show that Shakespeare is thinking of Shylock as a dissenting Christian rather than a Jew<sup>44</sup> but even if this is taking the matter too far, there can be no doubt that it is Shylock's *difference* to the Venetians that Shakespeare is underlining. Alan Edelstein points out that because it became usual for a country to adopt the religion of its Prince, and there was a marked paucity of Jewish Princes, Jews remained aliens:

Throughout the Middle Ages and until well after the beginnings of nationalism, the Jew remained a total outsider. More than this, though, "there is no denying that, in the minds of most medieval men, the Jew appeared to be a permanent stranger".<sup>45</sup>

The Elizabethan image of the foreigner was complex and in some respects contradictory. On the one hand they were regarded as crafty and clever and were seen in opposition to the honest simplicity of the rustic John Bull type of the ultra-English Englishman. Shylock illustrates this villainous, tricky aspect. On the other hand they were seen as fools, easily duped by the superior English wit, and the butt of much comedy, and

both Morocco and Arragon fall into this category. In both cases the extreme chauvinism of the Elizabethan Englishman is revealed, but at the same time there was an attraction towards foreign culture with the suspicion that their very cunning may be something worth learning from. It is noticeable that Shakespeare sets all his courtly visions of culture *abroad* with Italy as the favourite setting. As there were few cultural or traditional links with Italy at the time, and few Italians living in England, the image of Italy as a land of wit, pleasure and refinement which Italian literature painted, was easily accepted.<sup>46</sup> This view of Italy is more understandable in the light of the influence of Italian artists on British painting at the time, and the fact that Italy was regarded as the centre of artistic Europe, and Italian decorative painters were in some demand in England. Shakespeare himself refers anachronistically in the *The Winter's Tale* to the sixteenth century Italian mannerist artist Giulio Romano:

The Princess hearing of her mother's statue, which is in the keeping of Paulina - a piece many years in doing and now newly perform'd by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape. He so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer ...  
(*The Winter's Tale* V ii 91-98)

Nevertheless, to the general populace, Italy and Italians were almost as much of an unknown quantity in England as were the Jews.

The general public expected their dramatic presentations to show clearly who they were watching, and costume and attributes formed a convenient way of labelling aliens. Glynne Wickham, in the second volume of *Early English Stages* points out that

care was taken to distinguish both ... abstract characters [personifications such as 'London' and 'River Thames'] from mortals and English mortals from foreigners. This was achieved by close attention to the details of fashionable attire in continental countries and a similar closeness to observed fact in the portrayal of Moors, Indians, Russians and other strangers of exotic dress or facial appearance.<sup>47</sup>

#### 7.b. Portia's foreign suitors

Costume, however, was not the only way of differentiating the foreigner from the Englishman. Foreigners were recognisable by their stereotyped attributes not only of dress, but of traditional (for the English viewer) national characteristics, and Portia's suitors come under this scrutiny.

The list of Portia's suitors has puzzled many critics as being irrelevant but it is important in that it underlines the theme of foreignness, of alienness, or not belonging, which runs through the play. Portia's catalogue of the stereotyped faults of the various countries in I ii is obviously comic. Shakespeare shows the dangers of taking generalisations too seriously by including an English suitor. Portia dismisses the coltish horse-mad Neapolitan, the unamused and unamusing County Palatine, the multifarious Frenchman, the incomprehensible and heterogeneous Englishman, the blustering but cowardly Scot and the sodden German. Each, (including the Englishman)

performs his national stereotype - at least so Portia assures us, who never see them - as if on purpose to deserve her scorn. But doing so, they please the audience as well, which knows in advance, but is tickled to be reminded, which foreigner will be mad for horses, which for drink; which will be affected, which super-sober, which dumb.<sup>48</sup>

The alienness of Portia's suitors is an important element in the play, and the two (apart from Bassanio) who we actually see have their foreign origin emphasised, Morocco by his skin colour, his white robes and his elaborate language (which prefigures that of Othello) and Arragon by his place of origin, Spain, which for Elizabethans denoted the embodiment of Pride, and his tortured language and reasoning. Bassanio, when he arrives to woo Portia, is not immediately identified, although the audience is aware of who the new arrival is. His herald is announced by the messenger as 'a young *Venetian*' (II ix 87) and the implication is that his lord is of the same city i.e. one who belongs, and not a foreigner. Although Belmont is not Venice, and in many ways has different values, it is not an alien world. Most of the characters cross freely from Venice to Belmont and back, and the differences are between two side of one coin, rather than between two different currencies.

### 7.c. The Moor and the Jew

#### 7.c.i. An alien appearance

It is significant that one of the three suitors that the audience actually sees is a Moor, and therefore someone who is *visually* alien. Sinsheimer points out that in both of his plays set in Venice Shakespeare uses an alien as a major figure:

the Jew and the Moor. Both are creatures who have no corresponding types in the Elizabethan England ... The mystery of a foreign race of men, the mystery of the unusual and extraordinary, broods over them both. Both elicit a peculiar expectation and excitement.<sup>49</sup>

Shakespeare uses the figure of the Moor in three plays. In *Titus Andronicus*, an early play in the popularly bloodthirsty vein, Aaron is a deep-dyed villain, but he is still allowed a spark of humanity in his concern for his new-born son. In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare gives us the Prince of Morocco of whom Grebanier says:

I believe that no one has remarked that the Prince of Morocco is probably the earliest example in Elizabethan drama of a Moor who is not villainous.<sup>50</sup>

In *Othello*, Shakespeare paints a man tragically misguided by misplaced trust. Shakespeare shows no sign of racial prejudice; his Moors are not wicked because of their skin colour, indeed, two are not wicked in the real sense of the word at all, but their downfall comes because they do not fit into the society depicted in the play. Both *Othello* and *Morocco* reveal themselves as essentially vain men. This was underlined in Laurence Olivier's portrayal of *Othello* when he makes his first entrance sniffing a rose. It is because of his vanity and pride that he cannot cope with the thought of *Desdemona's* infidelity, and the same vanity and pride blind him to the true characters of those surrounding him. *Morocco's* pride and vanity lead him to make the wrong choice of casket. Both operate on a different cultural system to the play world in which they find themselves. Their values, and their reactions in attempting to implement those values, reveal their essential alienness to the codes of the other characters. *Morocco* and *Othello* in particular are at sea in an environment which they cannot understand, and part of their tragedy is that they do not realise this. The same can be said for *Shylock*.

#### 7.c.ii. **Morocco: the justification of appearance**

*Morocco* is verbally introduced at the end of the scene in which *Portia's* suitors are pilloried, and we are treated to more of her prejudice in her reference to his complexion, although it should be remembered that there was still an overlap of the medieval meaning of complexion at this time, which refers to the balancing of the four elements or humours in the body, and which therefore concerns the character rather than the appearance.<sup>51</sup> *Portia* in this case associates *Morocco's* darkness with the devil, as the *Venetians* associate *Shylock's* Jewishness with the devil and it can be argued that both *Antonio* and *Portia* show prejudice against outward elements. *Antonio* may well have more reason to believe that his impressions of *Shylock* are well-founded, (he has rescued other Christians from the Jew's clutches), but he has not done business directly with him. He shows his antagonism in the next scene when he says

I am as like to call thee so again,  
To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too. (I iii 125-6)

Shakespeare gives both Morocco and Shylock opportunity to defend their appearance. Morocco introduces the second Act with the words

Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadowed livery of the burnish'd sun,  
To whom I am a neighbour, and near bred. (II i 1-3)

He asks to be judged not on his external appearance, but on himself. Ironically, when he comes to choose the caskets, he is guilty of this very fault, selecting the gold casket because of its appearance. His speech which begins as an apparent plea for universal tolerance develops into a boast of his own superiority.

Bring me the *fairest* creature northward born,  
Where Phoebus' 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 lov'd it too. I would not change this hue,  
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen ...

... By this scimitar,  
That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince,  
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,  
I would o'erstare 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 a roars for prey,  
To win thee lady ...

... And so may I, blind Fortune leading me,  
Miss that which one *unworthier* may attain,  
And die with grieving. (II i 4-12, 24-31, 36-38) (my italics)

Morocco's speech reveals that he sees himself as the most brave, most desirable suitor Portia could demand. His plea for an impartial reaction to his colour is seen as false modesty in the light of the rest of his speech - his true thought is that she should like him *because* of his colour, rather than in spite of it.

Morocco and Arragon both base their choice of casket on false premises and warped logic, relying, as Morocco has pleaded with Portia not to do, on appearance, and hence make the wrong choice. Shakespeare warns his audience about judging solely on appearance, but goes on to provide further warning that although 'all that glisters is not gold', the reverse is not necessarily true. Shylock's and Morocco's outward appearance may incur instant dislike or suspicion but they should be judged on their actions and motives. That these turn out to be either misdirected or

malicious is not a reflection of their outward appearance but of their inner character.

#### 7.c.iii. Shylock: self-justification or self-love?

Shylock's self-justification is longer and uses more powerful language and imagery. Nevertheless its framework is the same:

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. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. (III i 52-66)

Pro-Shylock critics have frequently referred to this as a sincere and justified argument but when taken in context it is clear that Shylock's logic is false. He uses examples of involuntary physical reactions to justify deliberate, moral actions. Like Morocco's speech, his words begin by asking for tolerance and equality, but end by announcing bigotry and superiority - 'I will *better* the instruction'. His words echo those of Morocco:

Morocco: And let us *make incision* for your love,  
To prove whose *blood* is reddest, his or mine. (II i 6-7)

Shylock: if you *prick* us, do we not *bleed*? (III i 58-59)

Blood is taken as the common denominator of mankind, and yet, despite their claims to a common humanity, both reveal a barbaric desire to shed blood and, more particularly in Shylock's case, a terrifying self-assurance that it is their *right* to do so.

#### 7.c.iv. Shylock's motivation

Shylock's speech is often taken as it has been printed above. The lines immediately preceding it are ignored and yet they intimate Shylock's true frame of mind:

Salerio: 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 feed my revenge. He hath disgrac'd me and hind'red me half a million: laugh'd at my losses, mock'd at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my



friends, heated mine enemies. And what's his reason? I  
am a Jew. Hath not a Jew ... (III i 45-52)

It may be possible for readers to ignore this passage and take the 'Hath not a Jew eyes?' speech out of context in the study, but this is surely impossible if the text is performed accurately in the theatre. Antonio in fact proves that lines 62-66 of Shylock's speech in III i regarding revenge, quoted above, are unfounded. Shylock bases his argument on a passage from the Old Testament:

But if death followe, then thou shald paye life for life, Eie for eie, tothe for tothe, hand for hand, foote for foote. Burning for burning, wound for wound, Stripe for stripe. (Exodus, 21. 23-25)

But Shylock's reasoning is warped; while the Scriptures allow the taking of an eye for an eye, or even a life for a life, Antonio has in fact done nothing to warrant Shylock's murderous intentions towards him. His implication is revenge for revenge, but there is no suggestion that the Christian merchant has already exacted revenge of any kind from the Jew. Shylock's own reasons for his vendetta are obscure; he details various complaints and it has been suggested that he hates Antonio primarily for his anti-Semitism. When the accusations are looked at in detail, this seems unlikely:

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 ...  
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 ... (I iii 37-40, 43-46) (my italics)

I am not bid for love; they flatter me;  
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon  
The *prodigal* Christian ... (II v 13-15) (my italics)

... Let him look to his bond. *He was wont to call me usurer;* let him look to his bond. *He was wont to lend money for Christian courtesy,* let him look to his bond. ... He hath disgrac'd me and *hind'ed me half a million,* laugh'd at my losses, mock'd at my gains, scorned my nation, *thwarted my bargains,* cooled my friends, heated my enemies ... (III i 42-44, 48-52) (my italics)

I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; *for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will.*  
(III i 116-118) (my italics)

This is the fool that *lent out money gratis* ...  
Thou call'dst me a dog before thou hadst a cause,  
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs. (III iii 2, 6-7) (my italics)

His main reason would seem to be that Antonio's free lending has jeopardized Shylock's business ventures. While he accuses Antonio of baiting him for his religion, his complaints always come back to his business interests, and Antonio's sabotage of them. What is more, Antonio has accused him in the most public market place of Venice and Shylock, suffering from the same vice as Morocco and Arragon, that of Pride, is hit in his vanity as well as his purse. His humiliation in front of the other merchants is incurred not by racial insults but by Antonio's denunciation of his 'bargains' and 'well-won thrift' 'Even there where merchants most do congregate'. The hindrance of his money-making schemes is, of course, a good enough reason privately and among friends (he speaks of it to Tubal), but he retains enough cunning in the trial scene to realise that it would not go down well with the Christian court:

So can I give no reason, nor I will not,  
More than a lodg'd hate, and a certain loathing  
I bear Antonio

(IV i 59-61)

However, it is possible that Shylock does not truly know the source of his hatred himself. As Grebanier points out:

It is part of Shakespeare's profundity that Shylock should not accurately know himself. What miser ever faced the truth about himself, or failed to call his penuriousness by some better-sounding name like thrift or self-restraint? That is why the greed of a Jonsonian miser is not really credible, and Shylock's is. This inability to face what he really is will make itself dramatically vocal when we meet him for the last time, in the trial scene.<sup>52</sup>

A clue to Shylock's state of mind comes when he is talking to Tubal after the elopement of his daughter

... The curse never fell upon our nation till now; *I never felt it till now* ...

(III i 77-78) (my italics)

He is reacting to the *loss of wealth* not the loss of his daughter to a Christian, and if he has never felt the curse on his nation before, he cannot have been much disturbed by Antonio's anti-Semitic comments. He goes on later

loss upon loss! The thief gone with *so much*, and *so much* to find the thief; and no satisfaction, *no revenge*.. (III i 84-86) (my italics)

#### 7.d. The Jew as an alien

It would seem, then, that Shylock cannot justify his actions by pleading a righteous indignation to anti-Semitic attacks, and yet it is true that

Steadily the Jewishness of Shylock is kept before us; like Barabas, he ~~uses~~ his name in his nationality - 'the Jew', 'the dog Jew', 'the villain Jew', 'his Jewish heart'<sup>53</sup>

but this is less evidence of anti-Semitism than a good device for

emphasising Shylock's *difference* from the Christian Venetians; a difference which is not merely racial. Shylock uses a different language to the Christians; their easy flow of conversation, larded with what are sometimes extremely complex metaphors, as in the speeches of Solanio and Salerio in the opening scene, contrast with Shylock's brusque language. His repetition of the terms of the loan in I iii slows down Bassanio, and his hedging deliberation contrasts with the eagerness and urgency of the Venetian. Shylock feels impelled to explain even the few simple images he uses:

there be land-rats, and water-rats, water-thieves, and land-thieves,  
(*I mean pirates*) (I iii 20-22) (my italics)

But stop my house's ears, *I mean my casements* (II v 34) (my italics)

Shylock takes no delight in music, a fact which he readily admits to, and which Shakespeare uses to point out a serious flaw in his character, as has been discussed already (pp.108-10 above). Shylock's rejection of music, however, goes deeper than a dislike of instrumental melody; he spurns the music of the language itself, restricting himself to pedantic biblical allusions, and in his increasing obsession with revenge, he almost rejects language altogether, becoming repetitive and crying again and again for his bond. 'Justice' and 'bond' begin to have an almost talismanic quality to Shylock. Three and a half centuries later Alfred Hitchcock was to use a similar technique in building suspense in *Blackmail* (1929), where the single word 'knife' is given increasing weight each time it crops up in the conversation, until the guilty conscience of the murderer can only hear that one word. Shylock's language and reason degenerate together.

#### 7.e. Outsiders: Shylock and Antonio

There is, however, a discord in the harmonious Christian world of Venice in the person of Antonio, who, together with Shylock has been dubbed an 'outsider', Shylock because of race and Antonio because of melancholy. Antonio's sadness is never explained in the play. Several critics<sup>54</sup> and various productions (including the Royal Shakespeare Company 1987 production with Anthony Sher as Shylock) see the latter as having homosexual elements, although there is no textual evidence for this, and it is more realistic to see Antonio as a father-figure to Bassanio. Graham Midgley, who follows the homosexual reasoning, explains Antonio's position as an outsider *within*, and Shylock as an outsider *without*.<sup>55</sup> While not accepting the homosexual motivation for this, there is no doubt that

Antonio is very much alone in the play, as Shylock is. His melancholy needs no explanation; it was a common emblem of the educated, sensitive aristocrat, and in addition, Shakespeare could be indicating that Antonio is 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief', foreshadowing his position in the trial scene as a sacrificial victim. While both Antonio and Shylock end the play alone, an attempt is made to involve them in the society which they have hitherto rejected. Shylock is converted to Christianity and is therefore forced to enter the Christian world and to live according to its moral codes and standards. Antonio is manoeuvred into standing bond between Bassanio and Portia and is therefore involved in their marriage. The two 'loners' of the play are absorbed into the fabric of the play's society, and cease to be outsiders.

#### 7.f. **Shylock as moral alien**

Shylock's alien reasoning fails to understand the motivation behind the Venetians' actions. They are as alien to him as he is to them, and their rejection of his own motivation, greed, he finds difficult to accept. Nor can he see that there are some things (in this play, at least) that cannot be bought for money, love and revenge being two. Bassanio cannot *buy* Portia's love (although he has to have money to woo her), he must earn it. Shylock may think he has paid 3,000 ducats for the pleasure of satisfying his 'humour' (IV i 43) in getting revenge on Antonio, but he has reckoned without the Venetian legal system, or rather, yet again, he has misunderstood it. His major mistake in so doing is to impose a Judaic system of justice on a Christian one. His dependence on the Old Law blinds him to the fact that his case is being tried in a country ruled by the New Law. This confrontation between the Old Law and the New will be discussed in the chapter on Justice and Mercy, below. However, if Shylock has misunderstood the Christians, they have underestimated him in failing to realise the depths of his hatred and the danger he represents, and by walking meekly into his trap (fortuitous though its closing may be) in the belief that such a despised social outcast can not be taken as a serious threat. It is therefore not only Shylock's racial and religious alienness which Shakespeare reveals, but his moral alienness as an avaricious usurer who gives away nothing for free and produces nothing.

## 8. Shylock as Usurer

## 8.a. The Usurer in Drama

The usurer was often shown in a foolish light. According to Stoll 'to the popular imagination a money-lender was a sordid miser with a hooked nose.'<sup>56</sup> He was a popular character in comedies, being the butt of jokes, and usually tricked out of money and/or marriage, often by the younger characters. There are numerous contemporary plays which show the usurer in this light: Chapman's *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (1596), Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), Jonson's *The Staple of News* and *Volpone*, Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, *A Knacke to Know an Honest Man* (1596), *Jack Drums Entertainment* (1600) and many others. Shakespeare, however, avoids most of the usual stereotypes - the suitor to a young woman, the hideousness and disease, the miserable clothes - and limits himself to his harshness to his servants (although this not extreme and is played down) and his tricking in the end by a young lover, although it is usually the man rather than the woman who does this. In many plays the usurer ends badly, with a horrific death; Barabas falls in a boiling cauldron and others drink poison or are eaten by rats<sup>57</sup>, but the usual end is generally supposed to be hanging.<sup>58</sup> Shylock is under threat of this, but his life is saved by his conversion, although he loses most, but not all, of his money (the play is confusing about exactly how Shylock's wealth is to be distributed). Shakespeare makes Shylock more believably by making him more human, but an Elizabethan audience would be well aware of the attributes usually associated with a usurer, and Shakespeare confirms this by making him a Jew.

Although the usurers in the above plays are not Jewish, with the exception of Barabas, usury and avarice were associated with Jews dating back to the Mystery Plays. In the medieval morality play *Respublica* the character of Avaritia (Avarice) in the Seven Deadly Sins was customarily depicted as a Jew.<sup>59</sup> Audiences going to see plays which contained Jews/Usurers would expect to be offered stock comic caricatures or, possibly, as in the case of *The Jew of Malta*, a stock villainous caricature. Shylock combines the two, both comic and villainous, but loses the hard edges of the stereotype while remaining emblematic of both Jew and Usurer. The subtlety of the portrayal has enabled both producers and actors to stamp their own ideas on the character, sometimes to extremes. George Bernard Shaw, writing a review of Sir Henry Irving's Shylock (Irving was then at the top of his profession and the initiator of the 'more sinned against

than sinning' Shylock in 1879) in *The Saturday Review* of 26 September, 1896 wrote

Sir Henry Irving has never thought much of the immortal William, and has given him more than one notable lesson - for instance, in *The Merchant of Venice* where he gave us not 'the Jew that Shakespeare drew', but the one he ought to have drawn if he had been up to the Lyceum mark.

and further on

In a true republic of art Sir Henry Irving would ere this have expiated his acting versions on the scaffold. He does not merely cut plays, he disembowels them ... A prodigious amount of nonsense has been written about Sir Henry Irving's conception of this, that, and the other Shakespearean character. The truth is that he has never in his life conceived or interpreted the characters of any author except himself.

Irving's Shylock was

not a bad Shylock or a good Shylock: he was simply not Shylock at all; and when his own creation came into conflict with Shakespear's, as it did quite openly in the Trial Scene, he simply played in flat contradiction of the lines, and positively acted Shakespear off the stage.<sup>60</sup>

It is a marvellously acidic piece of criticism, and is worth quoting for that reason alone, but it does make the important point that the sympathetic and pro-Shylock versions of the play which appear regularly are played in despite of, rather than in tune with the Shakespearean text. Shylock *is a villain* - like Shakespeare's other villains he gets some opportunity to make a defence for himself and his actions, but that defence itself is based on false logic, and Shakespeare is careful to indicate the direction for the audience's reactions to Shylock by presenting the Christian characters and ideas first. We are preconditioned into expecting Shylock to be villainous by what others report of him. His Jewishness is an emblem of his occupation and its concomitant avarice.

Shylock does not suffer the stock ending of the Jew/Usurer. The death of a main character would be inappropriate to a comedy, and because of the humanizing of his character, would run the risk of turning him into a martyr (a thing which some productions, beginning with Henry Irving's have tried, in spite of the text, to do). Instead Shakespeare gradually deflates him in the trial scene, progressively stripping him of revenge/justice, wealth, livelihood and religion (and with the last, his identity). Shylock fades out of the play, although not out of the audiences' memory.

## 8.b. Usury as a misuse of money

Usury and the taking of interest had long been censured. Aristotle denounces it as barren and unnatural:

The most hated sort of money-making, and with greatest reason, is usury, which makes gain out of money itself, and not from the natural use of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. And this term usury, which means the birth of money from money, is applied to the breeding of money from money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of making money this is the most unnatural.<sup>61</sup>

This is the attitude which Shylock attacks in his story of Jacob and Laban in I iii 71-85 and which Antonio upholds:

Antonio: Was this inserted to make interest good?  
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?  
Shylock: I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast. (I iii 89-91)

By the Renaissance making money out of money was seen as a serious danger to the soul. Petrarch condemns the misuse of money for this reason:

There are some that wyll abuse thynges that were invented for a good purpose, and those thynges that were evyll invented, to worse purpose, or worst of all ... And therefore thou hast founde money, wherewith thou myghtest purchase ignominie, and, unhappy man, myghtest make a lyvelesse mettall to be a burden to the lyvely soule ...<sup>62</sup>

Money was therefore not seen as evil in itself, but usury was regarded as an abuse and misuse of money, and a corruption of the true meaning of gold. The prime example of the man who misunderstands gold is Shylock. He sees it as a possession, something to be hoarded and gloated over rather than put into circulation. He loves it for what it is rather than what it can do, and puts his own interpretation on its accumulation and the taking of interest by justifying it from Scripture. His short-sightedness as regards money leads him to use it as a weapon, not understanding that it is liable to be turned on him. He twists truth in his gloss on the story of Jacob and Laban, and it is this kind of man that Timothy warns against:

Vaine disputations of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the trueth, which think that gaine is godlines: from such separate thy selfe. (I Timothy, 6. 5)

The misuse of gold and its dangerous, corrupting influence was to be explored in a more powerful fashion by Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens* where Timon finds that his supposed friends love him not for himself but for his money. In his madness he blames the gold itself:

Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold? No, gods.  
 I am no idle votarist. Roots, you clear heavens!  
 Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair,  
 Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant.  
 Ha, you gods! why this? What, this, you gods? Why this  
 Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,  
 Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads -  
 This yellow slave  
 Will knit and break religions, bless th'accurs'd,  
 Make the hoar leprosy ador'd, place thieves  
 And give them title, knee, and approbation,  
 With senators on the bench. This is it  
 That makes the wappen'd widow wed again -  
 She whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores  
 Would cast the gorge at this embalms and spices  
 To th' April day again. Come damn'd earth,  
 Thou common whore of mankind, that puts odds  
 Among the rout of nations, I will make thee  
 Do thy right nature. (Timon of Athens, IV iii 26-44)

but what it is important to realise is that it is not money in itself which is evil, but the wrong uses it is put to. The proverbial saying 'money is the root of all evil' is actually a misquotation; its true reading shows a different emphasis:

For they that wil be rich fall into tentation and snares, and into many foolishe and noysome lustes, which drown men in perdition and destruction. For the *desire* of money is the roote of al evil; which while some lusted after, thei have from the faith, and pierced them selves through with many sorrowes. (I Timothy, 6. 9-10)

Petrarch's 53rd Dialogue, Book I, derives from this:

The use of money is well knowne to buy those thynges that are necessarie for nature, whiche are but fewe, small, and easie to be gotten: what so ever is superfluous is noysome, and then they be no longer ryches, but cheynes and fetters, and no longer Ornamentes of the body, but impedimentes of the mynde, and heapes of carefulnesse and feare ... Ryches have procured the death of many, and doo bereave almost all men of rest.<sup>63</sup>

Money itself is not evil, but hoarding it is, and is damaging to the soul. Barclay issues a warning against avarice in his *Of Avarice, or Covetise, and Prodigalitie*:

He that is busy every day and houre,  
 Without measure, maner, or moderation,  
 To gather riches and great store of treasure,  
 Thereof no ioy taking, comfort nor consolation:  
 He is a foole, and of blinde and mad opinion.  
 For that which he getteth and kepeth wrongfully,  
 His heyre often wasteth much more unthrifely ...

Thus is this covetous wretche s blindly led  
 By the fiend, that here he liveth wretchedly,  
 And after his death dampned eternally ...

Thou hast no rest, thy minde is ever in feare  
 Of misadventure, nor never art content:  
 Death is forgotten, thou carest not a here



To save thy soule from infernall punishment,  
If thou be dampned, then art thou at thy stent.  
By thy riches which thou here hast left behinde  
To thy executours, thou shalt small comforte finde.<sup>64</sup>

Misuse of money is seen as primarily hurting the misuser himself, and this is what happens to Shylock. The damage done to the spiritual life is seen as more harmful than that done on a material level. Shylock suffers materially, but he is forced into accepting Christianity, by which his soul is saved in spite of himself, and because of the anti-usury laws for the Christians, he will be further prevented from doing himself more harm by misusing his gold by putting it out at interest. The trial has saved him from himself.

### 8.c. The English reaction to usury

In England usury had been forbidden by both civil and ecclesiastic courts, based on Scriptural pronouncements but Henry VIII had introduced an Act which permitted the taking of interest at a maximum of 10%, with severe penalties for anything higher. Even so, the practice was condemned, being justified only because the old

Actes bene of so little force and effect that by reason thereof  
little or noe punyshment hath ensued to the offenders of the same.<sup>65</sup>

In 1552 Edward VI annulled Henry's Act and brought in severe penalties against any usury

forasmuch as Usurie is by the word of God utterly prohibited, as a  
vyce most odyous and detestable, as in dyvers places in the hollie  
Scriptures it is evident to be seen, which thing by no godly  
teachings and perswations can syncke in to the harte of dyvers  
gredie, uncharitable and couvetous persons of this Realme, nor yet  
by anny terrible threatenings of Godd's wrathe and veangeaunce.<sup>66</sup>

Elizabeth I in turn annulled this in 1570 and re-enacted Henry's law but with the same condemnation

foreasmuch as all Usurie, being forbydden by the Law of God is  
synne and detestable.<sup>67</sup>

This act made even interest of 10% and under forfeitable, with the penalty set at three times the principal. Usurers were further forbidden to make wills, their estate reverting to the crown at death, nor were they allowed a Christian burial.<sup>68</sup>

Francis Bacon is often cited as the first Englishman to take a modern view of usury but in fact nowhere in his *Essay On Usury* does he actually sanction it. To quote Grebanier:

Bacon would presently justify usury on the grounds that its suppression would be possible only in a Utopian state. But the old Aristotelian argument was reiterated again and again. For instance, Francis Meres thus firmly restates it:

Usurie and encrease by gold and silver is unlawful, because against nature: nature hath made them sterill and barren, usurie makes them procreative.<sup>69</sup>

Even as late as the end of the eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham felt it necessary to write a *Defence of Usury* in which he justified the modern capitalist society. His essay shows the unpopularity of the money-lender in the mind of the general public:

Those who have the resolution to sacrifice the present to future, are natural objects of envy to those who have sacrificed the future to the present. The children who have eat their cake are the natural enemies of the children who have theirs ... While the money is hoped for, and for a short time after it has been received, he who lends it is a friend and benefactor: by the time the money is spent, and the evil hour of reckoning is come, the benefactor is found to have changed his nature, and to have put on the tyrant and the oppressor ... Now, I question, whether, among all the instances in which a borrower and a lender of money have been brought together upon the stage, from the days of Thespis to the present, there ever was one in which the former was not recommended to favour in some shape or other, either to admiration, or to love, or to pity, or to all three; and the other, the man of thrift, consigned to infamy.<sup>70</sup>

#### 8.d. The Jews and usury

In fact usury was forbidden not only in Christianity but also in Mohammadanism and Judaism, but the pressures of a society in need of ready cash forced a reassessment of Scriptural authority. St. Ambrose of Milan (340-397) commenting on Deuteronomy's sanctioning of the taking of interest from an outsider:

Thou shalt not give to usurie to thy brother: as usurie of money, usurie of meat, usurie of any thing that is put to usurie. Unto a stranger thou maiest lend upon usurie, but thou shalt not lend upon usurie unto thy brother, that the Lord thy God may blesse thee in al that thou settest thine hand to, in the land whether thou goest to possesse it. (Deuteronomy, 23. 19-20)

and

Of a stranger thou maiest require it: but that which thou hast with thy brother, thine hand shalt remit. (Deuteronomy, 15. 3)

defines 'stranger' as any enemy of God's chosen; any one

whom you rightfully desire to harm, against whom weapons are lawfully carried. Upon him usury is legally imposed ... From him exact usury whom it would not be a crime to kill ... Where there is the right of war, there also is the right of usury.<sup>71</sup>

This opened a loophole for Christians to take interest from Moslems, and Jews from Christians.

The unpopularity of the Jews brought about by their involvement in the practice of usury was not of their own making; in fact they had little option but to set up as money-lenders. It is important to realise that nowhere did Jews have any rights of citizenship, or even residence. They were permitted to remain only through special order of the ruling prince or the papacy. They were not allowed to own land or to practice farming, nor were they invited to join guilds. Under these circumstances virtually the only option open to them to earn a livelihood was to lend money at interest, although there is evidence that a few followed other occupations, notably that of physicians,<sup>72</sup> but generally the Jews had little choice of profession. In England they were used by succeeding kings as a source of readily available money, and each king imposed on the Jewish community higher and higher rates of tax, which they had to raise by pressuring their debtors, as Bentham remarks:

Indeed the easier method, and a method pretty much in vogue, was, to let the Jews get the money any how they could, and then squeeze it out of them as it was wanted.<sup>73</sup>

Understandably, the pressure which the Jews had to exert to cover their own debts made them increasingly unpopular, and led to their being regarded as grasping and ruthless.

The most indebted to the Jews were the nobility who found that with the change in social economy, they needed cash rather than land, and to raise the former, frequently put the latter up as security. Because Jews could not own land, when they repossessed land for a debt they had to sell it immediately, and this they usually did to the land owning magnates who composed a strong and increasingly powerful handful of barons. This endangered the throne, as it was recognised that over-powerful barons were a threat to the stability of the crown, thus through no fault of their own, the Jews were also regarded as a threat to the sovereign. Because officially usury was forbidden to Christians, the words Jew and Usurer were often used synonymously, although in reality the loophole opened by Deuteronomy's 'stranger' rapidly stretched beyond all biblical authority. With the new demands for cash made, for example, by the Crusaders in need of equipment and supplies, the gap between Church theory and Christian practice steadily widened, and by the fifteenth century there were Christian money-lenders who charged outrageous interest and were more grasping and avaricious than their Jewish counterparts.

During the cultural and economic expansion of the Renaissance Florentine bankers are on record as demanding as much as 266% interest on loans.<sup>74</sup> Dante names names when he describes the usurers' hell; the Scrovigni, Gianfigliuzzi, Ubriachi and Buiaimonte were all Florentine Christian money-lenders, or as they preferred to be known, bankers, and the fourteenth century Wall Street was Florence's *Calimala* or Evil Street.<sup>75</sup> By calling these Christian money-lenders "Jews", the authorities glossed over their ignoring of the Scriptural and civic rulings. The preface to a pamphlet written by Thomas Wilson in 1572, *A Discourse uppon usurye*, shows that by the last quarter of the sixteenth century, free lending between Christians had virtually become a thing of the past:

that ouglie, detestable and hurtefull synne of usurie, whiche, being but one i grossenes of name, caries many a mischief linked unto it in nature, the same synne beinge nowe so rancke throughout all Englande, not in London onelye, that men have all together forgotten free lending, and have geuen themselves wholye to lyve by fowle gayning, makinge the lone of monye a kinde of merchandize, a thinge directlye against all lawe, against nature, and against god. And what should this meane, that in steade of charitable dealing, and the use of almose (for lending is a spice therof), hardenes of harte hath nowe gotten place, and greedie gayne is cheefelye folowed, and horrible extorcion commonly used. I do verely beleve, the ende of thys worlde is nyghe at hande.<sup>76</sup>

and in the Stationers' Company Register for 1595 Miles Mosse's *Arraignment and Conviction of Usury* is described as containing

proof that it [usury] is manifestly forbidden by the Word of God, and sundry reasons alleged why it is justly and worthily condemned ... Divers causes why usury should not be practised of a Christian, especially not of an Englishman, though it could be proved that it is not simply forbidden in the Scriptures.<sup>77</sup>

Usury was therefore seen not only as something in which a Christian should not indulge, but also as something which was particularly abhorrent to the honourable Englishman. One can almost hear Wilson's Preacher barking 'It's not *British* you know!' The chauvinism of the English is shown in this attitude, and Shylock's alienation from the Christian Venetians with whom the Shakespearean audience would have identified, is underlined by his participating in an alien, un-English business. As E. C. Pettet points out, the use of a *Jewish* usurer raises the possibility that

Shylock symbolizes the feeling, shared by Shakespeare, that usury is something alien to the national and traditional way of life.<sup>78</sup>

However much the patriotic Englishman would like to deceive himself, there can be no question that for the Elizabethans money-lenders were a common source of cash. Barclay's *Of Usurers and Okerers*, while still condemning

the Jews for their money-lending, makes it clear that Christians were just as involved:

Though the Jewes live in errour and darkenes,  
Geven to usury (as labouring men oft saies)  
Yet are they more geven to pitie and mekenes,  
And almes, then christen men are nowe a dayes,  
In usury we ensue the Jewes wayes,  
And many other sinnes foule and abhominable,  
Renning without measure which is intollerable.

For his usury the Jewe is out exiled  
From christen coastes, yet of us many one  
With the same vice is infect and defiled.<sup>79</sup>

In the last twenty years of the sixteenth century numerous members of the nobility found themselves in debt to usurers to the tune of thousands of pounds, including Sir Philip Sidney, the Earls of Huntingdon, Leicester and Essex, the Duke of Norfolk and Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton who had at one time been forced to surrender his estates to creditors and 'scarce knows what course to take to live'.<sup>80</sup> Wilson, in his pamphlet, puts into the mouth of his Preacher the words

What is the matter that Jewes are so universallie hated wheresoever they come? For soothe, usurie is one of the chief causes, for they robbe all men that deale with them, and undoe them in the ende. And for thys cause, they were hated in England, and so banyshed worthelye.<sup>81</sup>

even though by this time the Jews had been absent from England for over two hundred years. It seems clear that the term 'Jew' had come to refer to *all* usurers, and was a convenient method of self-deception. Despite all evidence to the contrary, Englishmen convinced themselves that because *all* Jews were usurers, *all* usurers must be Jews, a generalisation which was patently untrue on both counts.

In England by the end of the sixteenth century, after three hundred years without any direct knowledge of Jews, the term had come to be associated with, at first usurers of any religion, and later for dissenters, recusants, pawnbrokers, clothiers and foreigners in general. This expansion of a specific term to include a wide generalisation can be demonstrated in this century when Hitler's Germany labelled French Impressionist, Cubist, Expressionist and Abstract art, much modern music and all American jazz as 'Jewish Art'.<sup>82</sup> At the same time it should be remembered that the term, although general, is still derogatory. It is an insult, but not necessarily a *racial* insult in intention. As Cordozo comments

There is no difficulty in Jacobean English in calling a man a "Jew", and saying in the same breath that he is worse than a Jew. "Jew"

is a humorous abbreviation of *Usurer*, a self-evident abbreviation because it was pronounced identically with the first syllable of that word. The pronunciation like "Yew" still survives.<sup>83</sup>

#### 8.e. Usury and commerce

In addition Roth points out that

In the Dark Ages, the terms 'merchant' and 'Jew' were sometimes used, in western Europe, virtually as synonyms: and certain branches of trade and manufacture were almost exclusively in Jewish hands. But, as time went on, Gentile competition in these spheres became increasingly strong. The Italian maritime republics embarked upon commercial activities with a degree of cohesion, reinforced by political backing, which the Jews could not emulate. Trade was everywhere organized on a co-operative basis, and impregnated with a feeling of religious solidarity which left few loopholes for the unbeliever. Accordingly, the Jew was driven to employ his capital in the only manner that remained open. Unable to engage in personal enterprise, he had to finance that of others - to lend out his capital, that is, at interest.<sup>84</sup>

Although here Roth is referring to the period up to 1189, it describes exactly the position of both Antonio and Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, but the excuse that no other trade was available was unacceptable to contemporary writers, for instance Petrarch:

loy: I am an usurer, I have learned none other trade to lyve by.  
Reason: This is a defence for thy covetousnesse, this is the cause whiche thou pretendest: and yf it be harde for hym that is wylling to learne, who can learne agaynst his wyl.<sup>85</sup>

Although there is no evidence that Shakespeare ever visited Italy, or indeed, left England, the fact that Venice was one of the strongholds of Jewish enterprise during the last quarter of the sixteenth century would seem to indicate that he was aware of European events and of the importance not only to the Christian world, but also to the Jews, of the Venetian trade. Venice instigated the first ghetto in 1555 which became the model for later Italian ghettos. She was also the first city to resume printing Jewish books in the 1580s after a break of a quarter of a century, and initiated printing Jewish literature in the vernacular (up to then Jewish books had only been printed in Hebrew). From the 1570s onward the Venetian Jews expanded<sup>86</sup> and although, according to Jonathan I. Israel, 'most of the ruling oligarchy accepted the expanding Jewish role' there were dissenters:

One such was Alvise Sanuto, a member of the Venetian board of trade who strongly dissented from the decision to renew the privileges of Venetian Jewry ... in 1604. Sanuto claimed that there were now more 'perfidious' Jews doing business on the Rialto than Christians and

that the policy of the state since the 1570s had, in effect, favoured the Jews at the expense of Christians, which he regarded as intolerable in a Christian Republic.<sup>87</sup>

The accusation that the Jews were so involved in commercial business that they had a controlling interest in the wealth of the world is one which has continued up to and into the twentieth century. Karl Marx goes one step further and condemns money itself as the root of the Jewish question:

Money is the jealous god of Israel, before whom no other god can stand ... Money is the universal, self-constituted value of all things. It has therefore robbed the whole world, human as well as natural, of its own values. Money is the alienated essence of man's work and being, this alien essence dominates him and he adores it.<sup>88</sup>

This reflects the alienness of Shylock's world of money to the Venetian's world of love to which we will return later in the chapter.

## 9. Love and Commerce

### 9.a. Love's usury

The overlapping of the two symbolic types of gold between the two worlds is enhanced by the use of commercial imagery between the lovers. Shakespeare uses this idea in his Sonnets, and recognises that, like some uses for gold, some kinds of usury are beneficial, as in Sonnets 4 and 6. The latter sums up the argument:

That use is not forbidden usury  
Which happies those that pay the willing loan (Sonnet 6, 5-6)

Alexander Leggatt is talking about *The Comedy of Errors* when he states

Nothing is gained in the process, for the transactions of business are barren and limited, incapable of the sudden, spontaneous enrichment that we see in the transactions of love.<sup>89</sup>

but he could equally be discussing *The Merchant of Venice*. Wealth is not condemned in itself, but the misuse of it is. As Peacham says

For all in vaine, our partes we keepe within,  
Unlesse we act, or put the same in use.<sup>90</sup>

Money, like love, should be freely exchanged, otherwise it becomes meaningless. This is emphasised by the use of commercial imagery between Bassanio and Portia at Belmont, imagery which refers not to money but to love: as John Russell Brown says

Shakespeare saw love as a kind of usury, and so in their marriage Bassanio and Portia put Nature's bounty to its proper 'use' ... the lovers practice their usury without compulsion, for the joy of giving.<sup>91</sup>

Bassanio uses the language of commerce when he has read the scroll inside the lead casket:

A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave;  
I come by note, to give and to receive. ...  
So (thrice-fair lady) stand I even so,  
As doubtful whether what I see be true,  
Until confirm'd, sign'd, ratified by you. (III ii 139-140, 146-148)

He presents her with the bill for his prize, but he gives as well as receives. He has earned his reward, and is prepared to exchange his love towards Portia for her love towards him. The exchange must, however, be legal, as the test has been, and the confirmation must come from Portia herself. She uses the commercial terms 'account', 'sum' and 'gross' but the context clarifies that the wealth of Belmont is not solely in its money, but in a balanced combination of 'virtues, beauties, livings, friends' which she wishes greater for Bassanio's sake. The inseparable quality of love and money in Belmont is crystalised in the wager suggested by Gratiano in which the fertility of the marriage is related to an increase of money in the form of a bet, but like the caskets themselves, it is a gamble. Belmont is another world, but it is not unworldly; its people realise the value of money, but also the importance of priorities, and for the Belmontians money is only one, and not the most important, of several considerations.

#### 9.b. The ventures of love and commerce

When Portia uses the word 'venture' in her opening speech of III ii, she is conjuring up associations not only with the risky business of trying to win her, but with the commercial business of Venice where merchants venture for trade and profit. The Oxford English Dictionary gives as its third definition of 'venture'

An act or occasion of trying one's chance or fortune; a course or proceeding the outcome of which is uncertain, but which is attended by the risk of danger or loss; and enterprise, operation, or undertaking of a hazardous or risky nature.<sup>92</sup>

which sums up very accurately the choice of caskets, but as its fourth definition it gives:

An enterprise of a business nature in which there is considerable risk of loss as well as chance of gain; a commercial speculation.<sup>93</sup>

This, while applying to Bassanio's 'venture' for the caskets, also introduces the ideal of a commercial enterprise, and conjures up the world of the Elizabethan Merchant Adventurers and the expanding knowledge of the world brought about by people like Sir Francis Drake, whose symbolic association with Jason and the Argonauts and their venture for



the golden fleece has already been commented on in Chapter 1. 'Venture' therefore has both commercial and chivalric connotations.

### 9.c. Belmont and Venice

#### 9.c.i. Liberality and rapacity

C. L. Barber states that for Elizabethans

the new commercial civilizations of the Renaissance, wealth glowed in luminous metal, shone in silks, perfumed the air in spices ... the 1590's were a period when London was becoming conscious of itself as wealthy and cultivated, so that it could consider great commercial Venice as a prototype. And yet there were at the same time traditional suspicions of the profit motive and newly urgent anxieties about the power of money to disrupt human relations.<sup>24</sup>

*The Merchant of Venice* makes an exploration of both attitudes. Venice, the world of finance and commerce and Belmont, the world of liberality and love, both have at their roots use of wealth, and both have validity. Shakespeare respects gold put to its rightful use. The two types of gold in the play are not simplistically divided into the Belmont and Venice arenas. Each type overlaps into the other world. In Venice, Antonio's mercantile activities are respected and respectable, and trade was a very important and expanding element of the sixteenth century - but Shylock has poisoned financial activities by his avaricious lending. Belmontian gold is used in the loan Antonio freely makes to Bassanio, and the multiplied sum Bassanio offers for Antonio's release in the trial. In Belmont, Venetian gold appears in the gold casket, an ornamental treasure which contains not riches but corruption. The difference in the moral quality of the gold is not in its substance but in its use. While Belmont gold is used to further happiness, create life, and is freely exchanged and circulated, thus increasing and enriching those who expend it, Venetian gold is admired and hoarded, sent out only to increase *itself*, and it does not benefit anyone, even ultimately corrupting those who allow themselves to fall under its spell.

While Shylock's Venice is that of rapacious commerce, Antonio's Venice uses money in a Belmontian sense; by free exchange to enrich the city and its inhabitants, encouraging trade and productivity. The importance of generosity and liberality is emphasised in the writers of the sixteenth century. Barclay's seventh stanza of *Of fooles that repent of that they have geven* reads

Thus he that of goodnes and liberalitie,  
With mery face and chearefull countenance,  
Geveth to his frende that hath necessitie,

And to other men good of their governaunce  
 By almes and pitie his dede shall him advaunce  
 To worthy laudes and thankes manyfolde,  
 And unto a good name which better is then golde.<sup>95</sup>

Petrarch's *Physicke* tells the story of a wise but poor father and a rich and clever son. The former was poor because he gave all he made to his family and friends; the latter was rich because he hoarded all his gold, and made no use of it. One day the son went on a trip to Rome and during his absence his father took his money bags, replacing the gold with sand, and bought clothes, a house and horses for the family. On the son's return home, he was amazed at the change in his family, but could not fathom the reason until he finally opened his money bags and found them full of sand. His father came to ask why he was wailing, and on being told that his gold was gone, replaced by sand, replied 'what difference does it make to you whether they are full of gold or sand?'. Petrarch moralises the story thus:

For unto many, money is unprofitable and without use, and dooeth them none other good, but fylleth a roome, and occupieth theyr myndes, and among moste men it is wickedly used, and but among very fewe employed to good purposes.<sup>96</sup>

This prefigures Barabas's opening speech in *The Jew of Malta* in which he discusses his riches while counting them, and reveals his miserly hoarding:

And thus methinks should men of judgment frame  
 Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,  
 And, as their wealth increaseth, so inclose  
 Infinite riches in a little room.      (*The Jew of Malta* I i 34-37)<sup>97</sup>

### 9.c.ii. Value and price

In the trial scene Shylock makes ready to weigh the pound of flesh he is owed. The emblematic qualities of the scales are dealt with on pp.244-51 below, but they also reveal the different ideas of value to be found in the two play-worlds. To the world of commerce the weight of anything can be measured in money; Shylock regards the function of the scales as the practical measurement of material, while Portia and Bassanio see them as a means of measurement of intangible qualities and virtues. Shylock believes that anything can be bought, and epitomises the person who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. He sees everything in terms of monetary value. The exchange between Bassanio and Shylock, when the former is arranging the loan, is an example of the differing view points of the two worlds:

Bassanio: May you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know  
 your answer?

Shylock: Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound.  
Bassanio: Your answer to that.  
Shylock: Antonio is a good man.  
Bassanio: Have you heard any imputation 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  
(I iii 7-15)

While Bassanio is thinking of Antonio's good name and character, Shylock is referring to his financial standing. The two views of life are incompatible. Belmont cannot be bought; the wealth of Morocco and Arragon is useless in winning Portia, and Bassanio succeeds although he is worse than penniless. His earlier prodigality may suggest that he is the man who knows the value of everything, but the price of nothing.

David Daniell has commented:

Shakespeare's concern is Shylock's otherness. The Christians in the play are extravagant, wasteful, over-generous - but their money does produce value, even if momentary:

Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,  
And, in a word, but even now worth this,  
And now worth nothing.  
(I i 34-6)

The value extends to the word. Shylock's horror at this, and at much else, is because he is from a system so different, and so well drawn, that he comes from another world altogether. His immediate predecessor is not Barabas but Oberon.<sup>26</sup>

He goes on to discuss the alternative world of Falstaff, but in fact most of Shakespeare's plays concern characters who are, either emotionally or because of circumstances, out of tune with the rest of the play-world; figures who do not conform to acceptable and expected behaviour. The plays are full of girls disguised as boys and characters falling in love with unsuitable or unexpected people. Often the comedy arises because a character is alienated by circumstances: Malvolio, for instance is comic because he behaves in a totally alien way due to a mistaken belief that Olivia loves him. In the tragedies such misunderstandings have more serious consequences, and again the focus of the plot often centres on unconventional behaviour: Cordelia's tragedy stems from her unexpected reply to Lear, and Hamlet's melancholy and madness, whether real or feigned, sets him outside the world of the court. What sets Shylock apart from the usual trend of Shakespeare's aliens is that his behaviour is exactly what the characters expect of him. He is accused of greed, cruelty and heartlessness, and his behaviour bears this out. He is an alien, not because he represents a 'subversion of tradition'<sup>27</sup> but because Shakespeare is doing the unexpected himself, and making his Jew conform to the

preconceptions of the character, although Shylock is much more than just a simple stereotype. Shylock is not an alien because he reacts unconventionally to a given set of circumstance, but because he occupies a completely different world to the other characters, and there can be no understanding or real communication between two such opposing spheres of interest.

#### 9.c.iii. Reality and fantasy

What appears on the surface, and is often accepted as a simple contrast between commerce and liberality ignores the overlap of Venetian and Belmontian gold into the world of the other, but also, and more seriously, ignores the juxtaposition of the financial bases of the two worlds. Belmont, with its air of fantasy and fairy tale is in fact rooted in commercial reality. Portia has more than enough wealth to buy off Shylock, and the comfort of her surroundings indicates a well-run estate.<sup>100</sup> Her father's wishes regarding the bestowal of her hand are, as has been pointed out in Chapter 3 above, based on economic reality. Venice, on the other hand, while apparently concerned only with the making of money, reveals a situation in which both Antonio and Shylock seem bent on playing out their fantasies, Antonio as the man willing to die for his friend, a martyr in fact, and Shylock as the avenging prophet of his race. The fantasy involved in each case is not only unreal, but unnecessary. Antonio has no need to die for Bassanio, who has the money to release him. That Antonio's letter only reaches Bassanio at the last moment, and asks not for repayment but for a last visit, suggests that Antonio is enjoying his misery. His initial presentation as a melancholic foreshadows this later assumption of the role of martyr.

Shylock also refuses to give up his fantasy of the judicial murder of Antonio, although morally he has no right to continue to demand it when the debt is able to be discharged. He is still fixed in the belief that he can buy anything, even life and death. He assumes the pose of racial avenger, but Antonio is no more anti-Semitic than the other Christians (and probably less so than Gratiano). As we have seen, Shylock himself cannot fully justify his hatred of Antonio. Venice is therefore a place which seems rooted in commercial and economic realities, where practical considerations should take precedence over dreams, but which is, in fact, where fantasy rules over financial considerations and common sense. Belmont's fairy-tale atmosphere has a solid base in reality. Shylock

believes only in his own Venetian system and cannot, or will not, see the fallacy of its premises. For this reason, Shylock cannot exist in Belmont. He is the only major character in the play who does not, at some time, transfer from one world to the other. His absence from the final act is not only because he has been personally beaten, but because the world he represents has been conquered. Shylock has lost the battle, but Venice has lost the war. His insistence on pursuing a fantasy has revealed the hollowness of the Venetian system. The fact that, not only is he not physically present in the last act, but that there is not even a mention of his name, and he is only referred to twice, in passing, as 'the Jew' (V i 15, 292), indicates that the characters have rejected his false world of usury and avarice in favour of the more practical commerce of Belmont. The dreamlike opening of the last Act is brought down to earth with the revelation of the 'loss' of the rings and its sequel. The relative values of Belmont and Venice are shown in Portia's ring which Bassanio accepts in Belmont, gives away in Venice, and accepts again in Belmont. The gold of Belmont is hard and true and lasting.

Chapter 6  
JUSTICE AND MERCY

1. Common law and Equity

1.a. The trial scene and Elizabethan justice

The trial in *The Merchant of Venice* presents the most formal and hierarchic scene in the play. The seriousness of the charge brought by Shylock and the incipient tragedy of the outcome are heightened by the presentation of a rigid and legalistic ritual which should be emphasised by the way the scene is set, with the Duke as a central, dominating but passive figure and the two antagonists, Portia and Shylock, ranged on either side of him. The stage picture is important, for it emphasises the opposition of principles, Common law and Equity, Justice and Mercy, the Old Law and the New Law and Synagoga and Ecclesia.

1.b. Elizabethan law

Although there are strong suggestions that Shakespeare intended the trial scene to be read allegorically, he also relates it to contemporary law. In Elizabethan England the judicial system was still evolving, and was divided into two courts; that dealing with common law and the Court of Chancery, which dealt with Equity. The two were completely separate, being housed in different courts, and often conflicted. Shakespeare had some experience of the law courts himself; his father was involved in a suit at common law in 1589 over a dispute which dated from 1580 and which he took to the Court of Chancery in 1597. The case, rather like that of Jarndyce and Jarndyce in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, was never resolved, but Shakespeare himself had more luck with that court in 1611 and 1615.<sup>1</sup>

1.c. Common law and the Court of Chancery

The common law judged purely on the legality of a situation, taking no extenuating circumstances into account. At the time the law stated that:

if a person borrowed £500 from a money-lender, and agreed to pay a penalty of £1000 if the money were not repaid on January 1, if the debt was not satisfied - even if the debtor tendered £500 on the morning of January 2 - the creditor could insist on the letter of his bond, refuse the £500, and imprison his debtor until he paid the £1000 in full.<sup>2</sup>

The same ruling applied if property was involved; an estate which was mortgaged on an advance, whatever the value of the estate or the amount of the advance, became forfeit if the debt was not repaid by the stipulated date, and it was the whole of the estate, and not simply a part

corresponding to the money owing, which was forfeit. This harsh ruling was mitigated by the Court of Chancery, which could interfere to prevent the creditor from obtaining more than his principal plus costs and interest, and allow a debtor to redeem his estates at any time. Cary's Reports state

If a man be bound in a penalty to pay money at a day and place, by obligation, and intending to pay the same, is robbed by the way; or hath intreated by word some further respite at the hands of the Obligee, or commeth short of the place by any misfortune; and so failing of the payment, doth nevertheless provide and tender the money in short time after; in these, and many such like cases the Chancery will compell the Obligee to take his principall, with some reasonable consideration of his damages.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, in the case of an estate, the creditor would have to account not only for profits of the estate made while he was in possession, but also for profits that would have been made, had he exercised scrupulous care in its administration. Creditors usually preferred, under these circumstances, to leave the estate in the hands of the debtor. Thus legal and equitable rulings were often in direct conflict, and it was not until the reign of James I that it was finally decided which ruling, when they did conflict, should have precedence. Equity prevailed and thus:

a creditor would secure a judgement admitting his right in full in a common law court, and find that he was prevented from profiting excessively from it by the Court of Chancery.<sup>4</sup>

Before this ruling, however, Equity did not have automatic precedence over common law, and there was always the possibility that common law would prevail, although the Elizabethan courts usually found in favour of a Chancery ruling. The audience, aware of this, could not, therefore, be sure of the legal outcome of the trial in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare, by using the legal system as it existed in England in the sixteenth century, increases the tension by balancing the outcome on the knife edge between Law and Equity.

Portia's 'quality of mercy' speech may seem, as George W. Keeton suggests, to modern audiences 'simply a tissue of lofty sentiments'<sup>5</sup> but to the Elizabethan it was

a not inapt description of the Court of Chancery. Equity is not mercy - it is a higher conception of justice itself than is to be found in the common law - but the impoverished Elizabethan nobleman must have regarded the relief which the Court of Chancery awarded him in respect of bonds which he could not honour and estates which he could not for the moment redeem as "dropping like the gentle rain from heaven"... Portia was adopting precisely the attitude of the Court of Chancery at the period. Substitute "estate" for "pound

of flesh", and you have a typical Elizabethan suit in Chancery.<sup>6</sup>

The creditor must account for everything he receives in possessing his bond:

In Shylock's case he is to take neither less nor more, nor must he shed one drop of blood - i.e. the estate must not suffer in the slightest degree for the entry into possession of the creditor.<sup>7</sup>

#### 1.d. Shylock as Common law and Portia as Equity

The trial scene divides into two parts, the first a common law case, in which the bond is proved, and which must take place to first establish that there is a case at all. During the sixteenth century bonds and contracts made in business had, like the bonds and contracts made in matrimony, far more weight than they do in the twentieth century. None of the Venetians doubt Shylock's right to enforce his bond, however barbarous it may seem, and Antonio brushes away Bassanio's reservations in I iii, not by laughing off the ludicrous nature of the bond itself, but by reassuring his friend that his ships are due at an earlier date than the bond, and that the money will be available.

In the trial, Shylock, sure of the legality of his actions, proceeds to prove to the court his right according to the letter of the law to take the pound of flesh, but Portia then shifts the court into Chancery. However, the Venetian court that Shakespeare presents us with does not have a Court of Chancery, and although Portia's argument may have had weight in an English court, in Venice her plea for mercy is meaningless, and Shylock is within his legal rights to stand on the common law. Having failed to arouse his sympathy, she admits his entitlement, but when Shylock shows that he clearly intends to take his pound of flesh, and thus to commit 'grievous bodily harm' on Antonio, Portia is able to bring in her second line of defence. Shylock has committed a felony by seeking to injure a Venetian citizen - his words and actions (e.g. whetting his knife) have proved this to the court, and he cannot deny them, or laugh them off as a joke, a 'merry' bond. The Venetian law states that anyone seeking the life of a citizen forfeits both property and life, and as Shakespeare's audiences must have been well aware, there was a similar law in force in England.<sup>8</sup> Shylock's criminal action is not in bringing an action on the bond to court, in that he was within his legal rights, but in insisting, against all reason, on carrying out a penalty which would almost certainly kill Antonio. Shylock is very lucky that the Duke does not follow his example and demand the letter of the law, but commutes the sentence to a



fine, and in this action we see what may be understood as the beginning of a Court of Equity, which Portia has both pleaded for, and demonstrated the value of.

#### 1.e. The mercy of Christian Equity

This showing of mercy is one of the reasons why the opinion that the Christians in *The Merchant of Venice* are as bad, and even worse, than Shylock and the Jews must be discounted. Harold Goddard in his essay on "The Three Caskets" is the main champion of this idea, seeing Bassanio as a mercenary fortune hunter, Antonio as a suicidal schizophrenic who sees himself in Shylock and hates both, and Portia as self-satisfied and arrogant. He puts forward Shylock as the only admirable character in the play, thus totally ignoring Shylock's murderous intentions towards Antonio, his determination to exact the full penalty of the law, and the contrasting mercy which the Christian court grants him. Although this mercy may seem strained to a modern audience, the Duke spares Shylock's life, when he is within his rights to have him executed, and by commuting the forfeit of half his property to a fine, leaves him something to live on. Although the settlement of Antonio's half of Shylock's wealth is not made very clear in the text, it being uncertain whether Antonio, holding the capital in trust, restores the legitimate profits to Shylock or keeps the revenue himself, it is clear that Shylock is not stripped totally of all his wealth, and however Antonio intends to use the money, he is generous because, with the loss of his shipping, he is still greatly in need of money himself, and has no intimation that some of his ships will, in fact, be restored. The fact that Antonio demands that Shylock make a deed of gift leaving 'all he dies possess'd' of (IV i 384) to Lorenzo and Jessica tells the audience that he still has something to leave. Shylock evidently prefers his moneybags to his religion because he submits to conversion. Many other Jews placed in the same position had preferred death to conversion. Shylock's melodramatic

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  
 When you do take the means whereby I live.

(IV i 369-372)

is meaningless; the Duke has already spared his life, and agreed to take only a fine from the half due to the state. If he truly believes that his wealth and livelihood have been taken away, then he has nothing to lose by refusing to be baptised. Critics who see Shylock as the staunch Jew, hating the Christians primarily for their anti-Semitism, ignore the fact

that he is given the choice between a Christian life with money and a Jewish death, and chooses the easier option. The crucial weight in the balance is the money. Shylock makes the speech quoted above when threatened with the loss of his wealth; when his religion is threatened, he makes no argument. He is 'content' provided he has some income. In England Shylock's criminal attempt on Antonio's life would have been deemed a felony, and as such would have been punishable by death and the forfeiture of all his goods. As an alien in Venice, the law is similar; Shylock's life is forfeit and all his goods, although half of these go to the state and the other half to his proposed victim. This is the letter of the law, but both the Duke and Antonio choose to employ mercy, as the English Court of Chancery could, to redeem both life and property, and, in Shylock's case, soul.

The trial scene can be read simply on the level of the reality of the contemporary legal system, although numerous critics have made various points about the irregularity of its court procedure. Bernard Grebanier quotes two instances, one a re-write of the trial scene by Richard H. Horne, *Shylock, A Critical Fancy* (1838) which was produced at Sadler's Wells on May 16, 1850 and which purports to

show what might have passed through Shylock's mind on listening to certain portions of Portia's line of defence, supposing the same trial ... had occurred *in the present century*.<sup>10</sup> (my italics)

The relevant part of this is quoted in full in Appendix B. Grebanier also quotes *The Albany Law Journal* of 1872 in which appeared an anonymous "report" (of which the author was probably Esek Cowen of Troy, New York) of a decision by the Supreme Court of New York, on appeal, of the case of *Shylock vs. Antonio*.<sup>11</sup> Grebanier's précis of this is reproduced in Appendix C. The problem with these, and other similar criticisms, is that they see the trial scene in terms of present day law, and not the different situation which pertained in the sixteenth century, when

the English law of contract was still in its infancy, and mercantile law scarcely existed as an element of English law.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Justice and Mercy

### 2.a. The use of allegory

Whatever opinion is held on the reality of the legal situation in *The Merchant of Venice*, the probability that Shakespeare also intended it to be read on an allegorical or symbolic level must be examined. The use of emblematic or allegorical figures was still very common at the time,

although the genre was becoming increasingly subtle as it was subsumed into the 'real' drama of the period, and moved away from the more or less straightforward personifications of the morality plays. Although superseded by the new drama, the morality plays still had an influence in sixteenth (and seventeenth) century plays and masques. Ben Jonson's *Volpone* shows the influence clearly in his stock characters (and their names), but Shakespeare uses the tradition in a more subtle, less obvious way. Contemporary literature was full of allegorical and half-allegorical figures:

*The Merchant of Venice* belongs to the years when Spenser's vogue was at its height, when any educated audience would be quite familiar with Spenser's habit of sliding characters along a scale that was naturalistic at one end and allegorical at the other.<sup>13</sup>

and although this takes for granted the educational status of Shakespeare's audience (which is extremely risky - many were undoubtedly educated, but not by any means all<sup>14</sup>) it is true that Spenser's work was very popular and influential in its own right.

## 2.b. The Four Daughters of God

The relationship between Shylock and Portia as respectively Justice and Mercy has long been recognised. The Trial scene has been likened to the debate between the Four Daughters of God, which finds its origin in the tenth verse of Psalm 85:

Mercie and trueth shal meete: righteousnes and peace shall kisse one another.

### 2.b.i. Early versions of the debate

This allegory makes its first appearance in a Jewish rabbinical writing, the *Midrash*, in which the debate revolves around the *creation* of man. Christian writers transferred this to the *salvation* of man, and the first appearance of this version can be traced to Hugo of St. Victor (1097-1141) in his annotations on certain psalms which were written not later than 1120, and Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) in his sermon on the Annunciation (1140).<sup>15</sup> Both treat the debate along the same lines until the final reconciliation. The basic argument usually takes the form of a trial of some sort, in which Justice, backed up by Truth demands the soul of Man because of his original sin, while Mercy, supported by Peace, pleads for mercy. Justice cites the law and is within her rights, but eventually Mercy prevails and the four sisters are reconciled.

It is the approach to the manner in which this reconciliation is effected which differentiates the two versions. Hugo attributes man's salvation and the reconciliation of Mercy and Justice to man's willingness to repent, stimulated by Truth. Truth ascended to heaven with man's confession and God sent Justice to man on earth, where she called for Peace, kissed her and the two sisters then ascended to heaven. Bernard, on the other hand, solves the debate by the substitution of Christ for sinful man. God's demand for a guiltless one to die for love of man so that

Death could not hold him, for Love, being stronger than Death, would enter Death's house and bind him, and so free the dead!<sup>16</sup>

is satisfied in the sacrifice of Christ, and the debate ends with Gabriel being sent to make the Annunciation to Mary. Of these two versions, Bernard's became the most popular and influential.

The first English version of the debate surfaced c1200 in a dialogue on the Virtues and Vices and in the thirteenth century the protagonists were reduced to two - Justice and Mercy. At about the same time Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, wrote *Le Chateau d'Amour*, moving the debate from the heavenly sphere to the earthly plane, and from this are derived the versions in *Cursor Mundi* (c1325) and the *Gesta Romanorum*.<sup>17</sup> About 1410 Nicholas Love translated *Meditationes Vitae Christi* which though sometimes attributed to St. Bonaventura (d. 1274), was in fact by his fourteenth century namesake, Cardinal Bonaventura of Padua,<sup>18</sup> in *Speculum Vitae Christi: the boke that is clepid the Mirrour of the blissed lyffe of our Lord Jhu cryste*. Its popularity can be assumed by the fact that it was printed successively by Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson. Bonaventura's work spawned many Latin verse paraphrases including in the late fifteenth century a poem by Walter Kennedy, *The Passion of Christ*.<sup>19</sup> Both Grosseteste and Bonaventura based their works on the Bernard version of the allegory.

#### 2.b.ii. The debate in drama

In England the debate appears in a least four early dramatic version,<sup>20</sup> and continues to be used well into the seventeenth century. It appears only once in the cycle plays, in the first part of *Salutation and Conception* in the so-called Coventry or N. Towne plays. It is more common in the morality plays and the earliest example is in the fragment *The Pride of Life*.

2.b.ii. (1) *The Castell of Perseverance*

Perhaps the most important version is the extensive treatment in *The Castell of Perseverance* which is usually dated in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. This play traces the life of man from birth to death and beyond to judgement, and represents in allegorical style the battle between the good and evil elements both internal and external to mankind. Having fallen into temptation and been rescued by Schryfte and placed for safety in the Castell which is guarded by the Seven Cardinal Virtues, Mankynde is finally persuaded to leave its protection by Coveytyse, who is the treasurer for The World. While still under the power of Coveytyse, Mankynde is approached by Dethe, and dies to be replaced by The Soul who appeals to Mankynde's Good Angel, saying he will go to hell unless Mercy speaks for him. At this point the Four Daughters, Mercy, Ryt wysnes, Pes and Trewthe, appear to contend for the Soul. While Mercy and Pes try to rescue The Soul from the Devil's clutches, Ryt wysnes and Trewthe argue that Mankynde has damned his own soul by his own free will. When eventually they put the matter before God for his judgement, he decides in favour of Mercy and Pes, and the Daughters are sent to remove Mankynde from his Bad Angel and the Devil. They conduct him to heaven, where he is given a place on God's right hand.

There are interesting divergences in this version from the more conventional representations of the allegory. The whole structure is more elaborate, but what is unusual is that the chief vice is seen, not as conventionally, Pride, but as Covetousness, and it is this sin which puts the now aged Mankynde in danger. He is no longer tempted by Lust or Sloth or Gluttony; avarice is seen as an old man's vice, and as the worst of the lot. In an increasingly mercantile society, this cannot have been popular in some areas, but as we see from later plays, including *The Merchant of Venice*, avarice continues to be a favourite characteristic for the depiction of unpleasant characters. Death overtakes Mankynde while he is actually engaged in this vice, and having called unsuccessfully on The World for help, Mankynde finally lies down on his bed to die with the words

Now, alas, my lyf is lak!  
 Bitter balys I gynne to brewe!  
 Certis, a vers that David spak  
 I the Sawter,<sup>21</sup> I fynde it trewe:  
*Tesaurizat, et ignorat cui congregabit ea,*<sup>22</sup>  
 Tresor, tresor, it hathe no tak<sup>23</sup>  
 It is other mens, olde and newe,  
 Ow, ow! my good gothe al to wrak!

Sorē may Mankyndē rewe!  
 God kepe me fro dyspayr!  
 Al my good, with-out[en] fayle,  
 I have gadryd with gret travayle,  
 The Werld hathe ordeynynd of his entayle;  
 I wot no nevere who to be myn eyr.

Now, good men, takythe example at me!  
 Do for youre self whyl ye han spase!  
 For many men thus servyd be  
 Thorwe the Werld in dyverse place,  
 I bolne and bleyke in bloody ble,<sup>24</sup>  
 And as a flour fadyth my face.  
 To helle I schal bothe fare and fle,<sup>25</sup>  
 But God me grauntē of his grace,  
 I deyē certaynly.  
 Now my lyfe I havē lore,<sup>26</sup>  
 Myn hert brekyth. I syhē sore.  
 A word may I speke no more.  
 I putte me in Godys mercy. [*Dies*]<sup>27</sup>

As Mankynde dies upon the bed, his Soul crawls out from underneath it and says

"Mercy!" This was my last tale  
 That evere my body was a-bowth,  
 But Mercy helpe me in this vale,  
 Of dampnyng drynke sore I me doute.<sup>28</sup>

What is interesting is that Mankynde makes a very belated repentance; his life has been lived, at least latterly, under the rule of Covetousness, and yet the cry for God's Mercy is so powerful that it is enough to put his soul in the balance. Justice is within her rights in insisting on his punishment - he has not been a good Christian - but Mercy pleads for him

In strict justice God cannot pardon him; but God's mercy is greater than his desire for justice, and the soul is received into heaven.<sup>29</sup>

As Portia tries to demonstrate to Shylock, no man is ever beyond mercy unless he himself wilfully rejects it; there is always hope. As Mercy, in her petition says:

Lord, thou[gh] that man hathe don more mysse thanne good,  
 If he dey in very contricioun,  
 Lord, the lest drope of thi blod  
 For hys synne makyth satisfaccioun,  
 As thou deydyst, Lord, on the rode,  
 Graunt me my peticioun!  
 Lete me, Mercy, be hys fode,<sup>30</sup>  
 And graunte hym thi saluacion.<sup>31</sup>

*The Castell of Perseverance* does not follow the usual scheme of making Christ responsible for man's sins and thus redeeming him by his blood. The decision is made as a pure choice between severe, but logical justice and the sweet reasonableness of mercy.

#### 2.b.ii. (2) *La Vengeance Nostre Seigneur*

The allegory of the Four Daughters of God, although popular in England, (it also appears in prose works such as *Piers Plowman* and *The Castle of Sapience*) was more common in French drama. One curious version is an anonymous French play *La Vengeance Nostre Seigneur* of around 1491,<sup>32</sup> which although it had no influence on other versions is interesting in relation to *The Merchant of Venice* because it concerns a debate between Justice and Mercy about the condemnation of the Jews. The subject was a popular one for literary debates, but this appears to be the only case where it is conflated with a debate between the daughters. Justice starts the debate with a demand for the destruction of the Jews because of the corruption and sacriligious indifference of the High Priests. Mercy opposes her, but after God has appointed Truth and Peace as judges, Justice wins her case. She then details horrific punishments, which Mercy tries to annul on the grounds of their inhumanity. When God asks for the opinions of Truth and Peace, these two take over the debate, taking their usual sides,

Verite forcing Paix to concessions, point by point, until the condemnation of the Jews is complete. God then pronounces sentence, granting to Justice all her claims and to Misericorde hope for those who repent and are converted. To induce their penitence, He will cause many signs and wonders, a promise which much comforts Misericorde, who hopes that all may be thus terrified into turning from their sins.<sup>33</sup>

Although it would be unreasonable to suggest that Shakespeare was familiar with this play, the sentiments it expresses are interesting in relation to the trial scene. Shylock is in danger of suffering a severe punishment for his sin, the attempt on Antonio's life. His only hope of redemption is to convert, and he is induced to do this, not by a sudden change of heart and true repentance, but by the fear induced by the threat to his life.

#### 2.b.iii. Portia as Sapience

In *The Four Daughters of God* Hope Traver has detailed the development of the Justice/Mercy allegory and relates it at one point, in a footnote, to

*The Merchant of Venice*. Strangely she associates Portia not with Mercy, as most critics who have commented on this have done, but to Sapience. The play referred to is a French one, *Mystère de la Passion* by Arnout Greban (c1473) which contains a 'Proces de Paradis' which appeared on three separate days. Traver says

Sapience, like Portia, for a time appears to side with Justice (Shylock), upholding the validity of the claim against the accused and the necessity of satisfying it. Verite and Pais, as friends of the accused, suggest means whereby man may escape (either by the imposition of long penance, or by the vicarious suffering of an angel) even as Antonio's friend, Bassanio, offers to pay double the amount of gold due Shylock, and finally to suffer in his stead. Sapience (Portia) asks Justice (Shylock) if she will accept these offers; and when Justice refuses, she shows that the offers made in behalf of mankind do not satisfy the conditions of the sentence resting upon him ... But now Sapience, who had seemed to side wholly with Justice, shows her sympathy for Misericorde by declaring that though the sentence must be fulfilled, man may escape through the substitution of God's son.<sup>34</sup>

She points also to similarities in the language, where Sapience is described as a noble and wise judge, first by Verite (on the side of Justice) and then, with the mitigation of the judgement, by Misericorde, echoing Shylock's 'O, wise young judge, how I do honour thee!', and Gratiano's later 'O upright judge! ... O learned judge!'

## 2.c. Shylock as Justice

In the last cited play, Shylock would appear in the role of the defendant, but it is more usual to see him in the role of prosecutor. Shakespeare has emphasised this element by Shylock's statements:

I stand for judgment, (IV 1 103)

and

I stand here for law. (IV 1 142)

He is the unswerving face of absolute justice, demanding the letter of the law and unaffected by its spirit, or by any sense of mercy. Shylock as Justice knows and demands his rights. Portia in the Venetian law system, and Mercy in God's heaven, have no legal rights to demand. As Portia says, mercy cannot be forced; it is

not strain'd;

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath

(IV 1 179-181)

and it is ironic that Portia's speech, with its Christian doctrine of forgiveness, is derived from the Old Testament:

My doctrine shal drop as the raine, and my speach shall still as  
doeth the dewe, showre upon the herbes, and as the great raine upon  
the grasse. (Deuteronomy, 32. 2)



Justice has the backing of the court, and can be imposed by external means, but mercy must come from within. In addition, justice is self-sufficient, but mercy, to have any meaning at all, must have something to be merciful to. As Peace argues in the *Court of Sapience*

Truth ... can reign as princess without falsehood, Right have sovereignty without injury, or I without war; but Mercy has no power, except there be trespass.<sup>35</sup>

Shylock's mistake is that he does not believe there has been any trespass

Duke: How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend'ring none?

Shylock: What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong? (IV i 88-89)

In fact, his trespass is directly against God; he has assumed the role of God in taking upon himself both the right to revenge and the power to take life. He goes not only against Christian teaching, but against Old Testament ruling as well. Murder is condemned by the Old Testament:

Who so sheadeth mans blood, by man shal his blood by shed: for in the image of God hath he made man. (Genesis, 9. 6)

Thou shalt not avenge, nor be mindeful of wrong against the children of thy people, but shalt love thy neighbour as thy selfe: I am the Lord. (Leviticus, 19. 18)

But if a man hate his neighbour, and laye waite for him, and rise against him, and smite any man that he dye, and flee unto any of these cities [of refugel]: Then the Elders of his citie shall send and fet him thence, and deliver him into the handes of the avenger of the blood, that he may dye. (Deuteronomy, 19. 11-12)

and of course

Thou shalt not kill. (Exodus, 20. 13)

The most significant statement is found in the Apocrypha:

He that seeketh vengeance, shal finde vengeance of the Lord, and wil surely keepe his sinnes. Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done thee, so shall thy sinnes by forgiven thee also, when thou praieest. Should a man beare hatred against man, and desire forgivenes of the Lord? He wil shew no mercie to a man, which is like him selfe: and wil he aske forgivenes of his owne sinnes? If he that is but flesh, nourish hatred, (and aske pardon of God,) who wil intreate for his sinnes? (Ecclesiasticus, 28. 1-5)

Shylock, of course, would argue that Antonio is *not* his neighbour, but an enemy, and would use as his justification the passage from Exodus already quoted on p.202 above, which is the epitome of the Old Law, and ignores the more merciful directives of the Old Testament. The New Testament, in contrast, requires its followers, when abused or injured to

Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheeke, turne to him the other also ... Love your enemies: blesse them that curse you: do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which

hurt you, and persecute you.

(Matthew, 5. 39, 44)

and

avenge not your selves, but give place unto wrath: for it is written,  
Vengeance is mine: I wil repaye, saith the Lord. (Romans, 12. 19)

The idea that evil actions will rebound on their instigator was a favourite one with the emblem writers. Alciati has two emblems which depict Nemesis:

Hope and Nemesis are simultaneously present upon our altars,  
doubtless in order that you may not hope for anything unless it is  
lawful.<sup>36</sup>

and

Nemesis pursues and follows upon the footsteps of men  
and she holds a cubit-rule and a harsh bridle in her hand,  
lest you do anything evil, or speak improper words:  
and she orders that there be a measure in all things.<sup>37</sup>

Whitney uses Alciati's emblem for his own *Illicitum non sperandum*:

Here NEMESIS, and Hope: our deedes doe rightlie trie.  
Which warnes us, not to hope for that, which iustice doth denie.<sup>38</sup>

Barclay has a long section on *Of them that wilfully offende, not taking heede to the ende, and hurteth every man, not thinking to have their malice rendred agayne*, parts of which have already been quoted on pp.66, 68 above. The last stanza is worth quoting again in this context:

But when these caytifs hath hurt a mans name,  
Or done him in body or goodes preiudice,  
They thinke he ought not to render them the same,  
Though it may be done by lawe and by iustice.<sup>39</sup>

and the motto of his *Of breaking and hurting of amitie and frendship* contains the same idea:

He that iniustice useth and grievance,  
Agaynst all reason, lawe and equitie,  
By violent force putting to utteraunce  
A simple man full of humilitie:  
Such by his lewdnes and iniquitie,  
Maketh a grave wherin him selfe shall lye,  
And lewdlye he dyeth that liveth cruelly.<sup>40</sup>

while Watson emphasises the right of God, rather than man, to judge:

... as thou Jugeth an other thou shalt be Jugged and tormented by  
Eacus Juge of helle. God almyghty after our dethe shall Juge bothe  
feble and stronge and there ye shall fynde the poore folke the  
whiche ye have oppressed by rapyne and extorcyon For who that  
executeth not egall Jugement in this present vale of misery shall be  
accused before the hye iuge the whiche gyveth iuste and egall  
sentence after the good or the evyll that they have done in this  
mortall lyfe ... For who that wolde gyve all the golde and chevaunce  
of the worlde shall not escape. For he is the grete Juge eternall  
and imperyall above all Juges.<sup>41</sup>

Shylock's desire for revenge, therefore, goes against both biblical and proverbial precedent, and the warnings of the dangers of extracting vengeance, and the inevitability of such actions rebounding on the head of the revenger are manifold. Petrarch argues against both of Shylock's self-justifications which can be found in the words of Ioy:

- Ioy: I do no injury, but revenge.  
 Reason: What skilleth it whether thou offend first or last: It is not indifferent to mislyke that in another, which thou lykest in thy selfe: Wyle thou use that crueltie, which thou condemnest in thyne enimie, and be lyke hym in manners, whom thou art unlyke in mynde, and folow that thy selfe, which is worst in hym.  
 Ioy: I wyl, and it is lawful for me to be revenged.  
 Reason: Thou oughtest neyther to have a wyll, neyther is it permitted by any lawe, for although defence be lawfull, yet revengement is forbydden: it is written, *He that wylbe revenged, shal finde revengement from God. And againe, as I sayd before, Vengeance is mine, and I wyl repay when I see good,* sayth the Lorde ... Thou wylt hurt thy selfe more then thyne enimie. Perhaps thou mayest destroy his body or riches, but thou shalt cast away thyne owne soule and estimation.<sup>42</sup>

Shylock, like Ioy, excuses his desire for Antonio's blood by claiming that it is his right, and that it is both lawful and an act of Justice. Earlier in the same dialogue Petrarch points out that how one handles revenge is a trial of oneself:

- Ioy: Myne enimie is fallen into my hands, I have power now to be revenged.  
 Reason: Nay rather there is happened unto thee a trial of thy selfe, whether thou be slave to anger, or friend to mercy ... the most excellent kynde of revengement, is to spare and be merciful ... The delyght of revenge, is short: but of mercy, everlastyng ...  
 Ioy: It is honest to revenge  
 Reason: But more honest to forgeve. Mercy hath commended many, but revengement none: there is nothing among men so necessary, or so common, as forgevenesse: for there is no man but offendeth, and no man but he hath neede of mercy ... Do thou so unto a man as thou wouldst have another man, yea God hym selfe, do unto thee<sup>43</sup>

## 2.d. Antonio as Christ

While Shylock has been related to Justice and Portia to Mercy, Antonio's position is rather more ambiguous. He can stand for both Mankind and Christ: as the representative of the human race, he can be the body/soul which Justice and Mercy fight over, Justice staking an unassailable legal claim, and Mercy attempting to refute it with equity. As a Christ-type, he would appear in the role of sacrificial victim: 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' and in his own words

a tainted wether of the flock,  
Meetest for death.

(IV i 114-115)

In his willingness to die, particularly as his sentence has been brought about by an action for a friend, he resembles the ultimate Christian, and indeed, possibly, Christ himself:

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love then this hath no man, when any man bestoweth his life for his friends.

(John, 15. 12-13)

Antonio accepts the bond to help Bassanio, and is prepared to die to fulfil it. Like Christ in the Four Daughters debate, he becomes bound for another, and while he offers his body in the trial scene, he repeats the gesture when he offers his soul as bond in the ring episode. The use of commercial imagery in relation to the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of man is clearly seen in a sermon given by Launcelot Andrews on the text of Galatians, 4. 4-5 at Christmas, 1609:

For, if one be in debt and danger of the Law, to have a Brother of the same blood ... will little availe him, except He will also come under the Law, that is, become his Surety, and undertake for him. And such was our estate. As Debtors we were, by vertue of ... The hand writing that was against us. Which was our Bond, and we had forfeited it ... Therefore, He became bound for us also, entred Bond anew, tooke on Him, not only our nature, but our Debt ... the debt of a Capitall law is death.<sup>44</sup>

Antonio is not a Christ-like figure throughout the whole play; Shylock accuses him of 'hating our sacred nation' and railing at him in public places

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft  
In the Rialto you have rated me  
About my moneys and my usances ...  
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,  
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine ...  
You that did void your rheum upon my beard  
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur  
Over your threshold.

(I iii 101-3, 106-7, 112-114)

Shylock is a dubious and biased witness, but Antonio does not deny the charges (although Bernard Grebanier makes the ingenious suggestion that Antonio is entirely innocent of these charges and his response is a cool piece of wit, making the analogy of an enemy accusing an only child of incest with his sister and receiving the reply 'with which sister do you mean?'<sup>45</sup>) Shylock also refers to Antonio as 'like a fawning publican'. It has been suggested that this refers to Luke, 18. 9-14 in which Christ relates the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with him selfe, O God, I thanke thee that I am not as other men, extorsioners, uniuert, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week: I give tithe of all

that ever I possesse. But the Publican standing a farre of, would not life up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smot his brest, saying, O God, be mercifull to me a sinner.

Or it may refer to Matthew, 5. 46-47:

For if ye love them, which love you, what reward shal you have? Do not the Publicans even the same? And if ye be friendly to your brethren onely, what singular thing do ye? do not even the Publicanes likewise?

It is worth noting that both are in the New Testament. If Shylock is referring to the first, it is a compliment to Antonio, albeit unintended. Shylock appears in the mould of the Pharisee in the trial scene; he believes his justification will come through obeying the laws. If the second text is intended the reference is not so flattering, but equally true. Although Antonio would willingly die for Bassanio whom he loves, he cannot even behave with reasonable civility to his enemy, Shylock. It is more than likely that Shakespeare had both texts in mind when he wrote the passage. There may also be a third reference, in that the publicans were tax collectors, and Shylock's insult therefore has its basis in money; he sees Antonio as depriving him of his lawfully earned revenue.

L. Tomson glosses the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican with the note that

Two things especially make our prayers void and of none effect: confidence of our owne righteousness, and the contempt of other: and an humble heart is contrary to both these ... are we despised of God, as proude and arrogant, if we put never so litle a trust in our owne workes before God.<sup>46</sup>

At the beginning of the play both Antonio and Shylock are guilty of this. They hold each other in contempt and open rivalry. Shylock retains this frame of mind throughout the play, but Antonio changes during the trial scene. His acceptance of his fate is the first step, and with this the acceptance and willingness to die. This symbolises his re-birth, he has to 'die' to 'live'. Shakespeare uses the same idea in *Measure for Measure* where both Angelo and Claudio have to be prepared to accept death before they can be saved. Claudio apparently does die, to be resurrected at the end of the play, and Angelo proves his repentance by his words

I am sorry that such sorrow I procure;  
And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart  
*That I crave death more willingly than mercy;*  
'Tis my deserving, and I do entreat it.

(*Measure for Measure*, V i 472-475) (my italics)

In contrast the unpenitent Barnardine is condemned by the Duke:

Sirrah, thou art said to have a stubborn soul,  
That apprehends no further than this world,

And squar'st thy life accordingly.

(*Measure for Measure*, V i 478-480)

In a more serious vein, Lear, at his realisation of the wrong done by him to his daughter Cordelia, expresses his willingness to die as a rightful punishment at her hands:

If you have poison for me I will drink it.  
I know you do not love me; for your sisters  
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong;  
You have some cause, they have not.

(*King Lear*, IV vii 72-74)

Antonio's besetting sin is Pride, which he must conquer to achieve true Christianity. Like Bassanio, he has to realise the value of humility to gain the prize which St. Paul talks of in I Corinthians, 9. 24. By the trial scene his arrogance has evaporated, and his calm acceptance of the situation and probable fate contrasts strongly with the hysterical obsession of the revenge-hungry Shylock.

As with the morality characters, it is the *repentance* of the sinner which induces mercy in the judgement. Shylock is not repentant regarding his treatment of Antonio, and is therefore not entitled to any mercy. He gets the full measure of the law - the justice for which he has called - and which, when it rebounds on him, he undoubtedly would prefer to forgo, but Portia, having forced this on him, demonstrates, with the Duke, the ultimate nature of mercy and charity in restoring his life and at least a part of his property.

## 2.e. Portia as Mercy

At first Portia directs her attempts to encourage mercy at Shylock, but when they are unsuccessful and he has fallen by other means, she then re-orientates on Antonio. When the Duke commutes the forfeit to a fine, Portia forestalls Antonio's reply

Ay, for the state; not for Antonio ...  
What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

(IV i 368, 373)

Antonio has learnt the lesson of mercy and instead of exacting revenge, as Shylock had wanted to do, grants him his life, and possibly some income, although the stricture that he become a Christian will in future curtail his money-lending activities.

If, as has already been pointed out in Chapter 5 (pp.201-203 above), part of Shylock's apparently moving 'Hath not a Jew eyes?' speech is proved fallacious when neither the Duke nor Antonio insist on the 'revenge' or

Shylock's rejection of Christianity is embodied in his rejection of Portia's arguments in favour of mercy. Many of the references to mercy in the trial scene are based on New Testament references:

And forgive us our sinnes: for even wee forgive every man that is  
indetted to us (Luke, 11. 4)

As for the former civill detts, a man may exact them, so he do it with shewing of mercy.<sup>49</sup>

*The Merchant of Venice* follows the lead taken by the moralities in presenting the debate as a balancing act, in which for much of the time Mercy seems to be very much the weaker, and Justice to be omnipotent, and the tension is increased by the doubts of the outcome. Shylock makes demands for justice from II viii onwards, although to be fair this is according to the possibly biased reportage of Solanio and Salerio. The concept, however, is introduced to the play early, and in a way which suggests the obsessional, relentless manner of its pursuit. Whenever justice is mentioned before the fourth act, it is in relation to retributive law, the bond, and the state - in the latter case with a

threatening flavour; Shylock says that the denial of his justice will 'impeach the freedom of the state'.<sup>50</sup> The impression is given of an irresistible force, which when it finally comes to court, meets an immovable object in the person of Portia. The word 'mercy' only appears in the trial scene itself. The two words meet in head-on collision in Portia's 'quality of mercy' speech, where they are set against each other, 'mercy' appearing six times and 'justice' four. Portia's references to justice are in relation to the necessary softening influence of mercy:

When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this. -  
That in the course of justice *none of us*  
*Should see salvation*: we do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much  
To *mitigate* the justice of thy plea. (IV i 192-198) (my italics)

but Shylock is adamant.

However, the sword of Justice is two-edged, and Shylock, by insisting on its literal application gets cut himself. Portia fails in her role as Mercy to persuade Shylock to relent in his pursuit of Antonio. She then fights Shylock with his own weapons and wins, but reverts to Mercy when she reminds Antonio of its qualities/existence. The Duke has already shown mercy; Antonio is in a position to demand justice or bequeath mercy, and Gratiano, at least, feels he should demand the full penalty; but the trial and Portia's reminder have taught him the dangers of absolute justice, and he has finally achieved true Christlikeness in his willingness to forgive his enemies.

## 2.f. The *Processus Belial* plays

### 2.f.i. The devil as advocate

The allegory developed along divergent paths, and the other main direction led to a series of version in which The Devil takes Justice's role and the Virgin Mary, Mercy's. This stemmed possibly from Hugo's annotation on Psalm 15:

The devil asserts his right to man as having been consigned to him after the Fall, and in both, this claim is refuted on the ground that the devil through his excessive cruelty toward man has forfeited his power over him.<sup>51</sup>

A Dutch version, *Merlijn*, by Jacob van Maerland (c1270) which was probably a translation of an older, now lost, version follows these guidelines. Jacopo da Theramo's *Compendium breve Consolatio peccatorum nuncupatum; et apud nonnullos Belial vocitatum ad papam Urbanum sextum*



*conscriptum* (1381), and better known as the *Processus Belial* was an enormously popular version of the *Merlijn* which it amplifies and departs from freely.<sup>52</sup> In both, the scene revolves around the attempts of the Devil to obtain the return of the souls which had been freed from his dominion by the Harrowing of Hell. Both plays contain versions of the Four Daughters of God debate.

#### 2.f.ii. Antonio as Everyman

In this version, Antonio becomes, instead of a Christ-type, the symbol of Everyman, and the arguments between Justice/the Devil and Mercy/the Virgin, take place over his head. The strength of the scene is in the image of two principles/personifications fighting. This issue becomes larger than life and transfers to a cosmic plane in which angels and devils, good and evil, are engaged in a superhuman battle, a psychomachia. Antonio becomes unimportant as an individual or a personality, his significance is in his position as universal victim. After the war is won, he is guided by his good angel, Portia, to make the correct/Christian decision in respect of Shylock's fate.

#### 2.f.iii. Shylock as a devil

There are reasons for relating the *Processus* plays to the situation in the trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice*. To begin with, Shylock is regarded as a devil; in the text he is described as such:

Launcelot: ... the Jew my master, who - God bless the mark!- is a kind of devil; ... the Jew is the very devil incarnation.

(II ii 22-23, 25)

Solanio: ... lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.

(III i 19-20)

Solanio: Here comes another of the tribe; a third cannot be match'd, unless the devil himself turn Jew.

(III i 70-71)

Bassanio: ... this devil ...

(IV i 282)

Even his daughter, Jessica, makes the implication that she sees him in the role of a devil when she says to Launcelot

Our house is hell; and thou, a merry devil

Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.

(II iii 2-3)

Launcelot compares here to the capering devils of the morality play, intended to amuse the crowds with their antics rather than, as the main satanic characters were, to terrify them.



44, Alexander Barclay, *The Ship of fooles* (1570, originally printed 1509)  
'Of pleaders in iugement',

Shylock follows another proverbial trait which the demons of the *Processus* plays also use. Masceroen, the demon emissary of Satan in *Merlijn* states

I will take my speech from the Scriptures, and confirm it by Heathen law.

and as Antonio says in reference to Shylock:

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. (I iii 93)

Bassanio deals with the hypocrisy of evil-doers when he is in the process of proving his own worth in choosing the lead casket:

In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt,  
But, being season'd with a gracious voice,  
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,  
What damned error but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament? (III ii 75-80)

Antonio accepts the bond in the first place, because it is proposed as 'a merry sport' with which Shylock 'extend[s] this friendship', and which he is prepared to believe is genuine, although Bassanio has his doubts. In any case, Antonio is confident of being able to repay the debt.

The association between 'Jew' and 'devil' is consonant with the popular view of the Jews at the time, but Shylock, in his cruelty, approaches the devils of the *Processus* plays. Shylock's association with the wolf has already been discussed in on pp.60-66 above, but it is worth noting here that Samuel C. Chew points out that in the *Booke of Christian Prayers* by Richard Daye, (1578), Mercy is opposed to the Vice of Cruelty, and is seen holding a lamb as symbolic of her gentleness, and standing upon a wolf labelled 'Crueltie'.<sup>53</sup> It is Shylock's cruelty in prosecuting the bond, as much as his rigid adherence to his idea of Justice which brings about his downfall. Like Masceroen's cries of 'Lord, where is Justice', Shylock's demands for the same are invalidated by the cruelty which they necessitate.

## 2.g. The attributes of Justice

### 2.g.i. The scales

Shylock, like Masceroen, sees justice in terms of a measure for a measure, and both make use of the traditional attribute of Justice, the scales, as depicted, for instance, in the woodcut accompanying Barclay's *Of pleaders in iugement* [Illustration 44]. Masceroen, opposing, the Virgin Mary, who is acting as advocate for mankind, says to the judge, Christ

When there is a strife between two parties, what does the judge do but make a division? Therefore give to me the evil, to your mother



45. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good and Bad Government* (1338-40)  
Fresco, Sala del Nove, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena  
a. detail of *Good Government*



b. detail of *Bad Government*





46. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
'Injustice', no. 164, p. 41

130

*Dicta septem sapientum.*

To Sir HUGH CHOLMELEY Knight.



47. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (Leyden, 1586)  
'*Dicta septem sapientum*', p. 130

the good. Put mankind in the scale. Her part shall be bitterly small.<sup>54</sup>

and Shylock appears at the trial with a pair of balances to weigh the part to which he considers he is entitled.

What Shylock in fact stands for is not the true justice which combines in harmony a strict code of behaviour with firmness, but corrupt justice. John Doeblen makes the suggestion that

It has further occurred to me that the scales might even have been held unbalanced in a Renaissance production.<sup>55</sup>

This is more than likely, as the unbalanced scales were a recognised symbol of corrupt justice, and appear in public halls of justice in the Renaissance as a reminder to the court of the importance of balanced and impartial judgements in a governmental context. Such reminders appear, for instance, in the allegorical carving originally outside the Nuremberg courthouse [Illustration 40] already mentioned on pp.171, 175 and in the frescoes by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Sala del Nove, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena (1338-40) [Illustration 45]. The latter shows two allegories of Good and Bad Government; Good Government is surmounted by a balanced set of scales, and Bad Government by an unbalanced set. In *The Merchant of Venice* the justice of the state is balanced against Antonio's life, and although the Duke wishes Shylock to relent his bond, he realises that the law must be upheld or, as Shylock says:

If you deny it, let the danger light  
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.

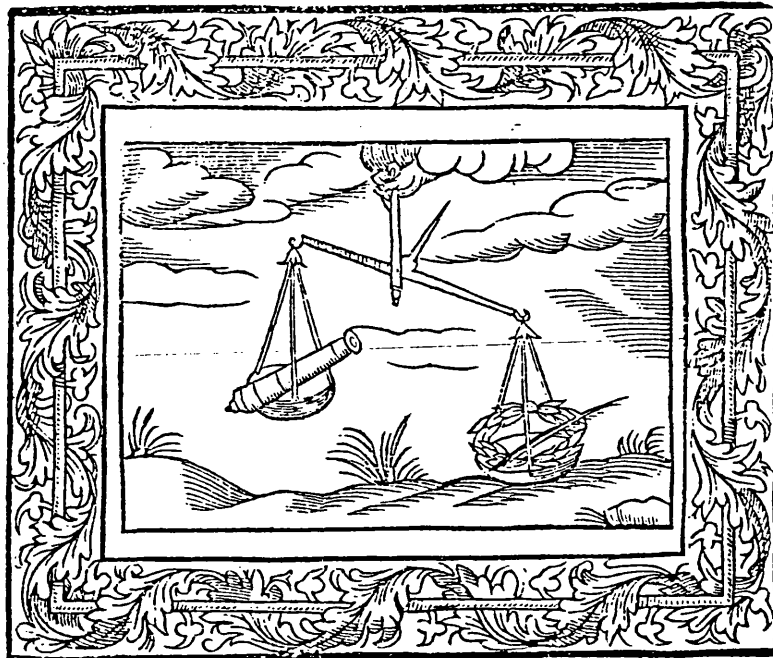
(IV 1 38-39)

In the trial scene the scales become a larger image, as Portia and Shylock stand either side of the central pivot, Antonio, fighting for his life. The balance of power gradually shifts from Shylock to Portia, and his high confidence plummets to depression as he sees his fortunes sinking, as Portia's rise. Portia and Shylock, therefore, represent physically as well as metaphorically, the two weights of the balance.

The traditional role of the scales in symbolising impartial justice is evident in the emblem writers. Ripa's emblem of Injustice [Illustration 46] shows a man carrying a bent sword and trampling on a set of scales<sup>56</sup> and both Alciati and Whitney [Illustration 47] use the balances to illustrate the first of the sayings of the seven wise men; 'A measure is best in all things',<sup>57</sup> and the idea that a middle line should be taken in all things, and that excessive emotions or actions are destructive is a recurring

*Quae pondere maior.*

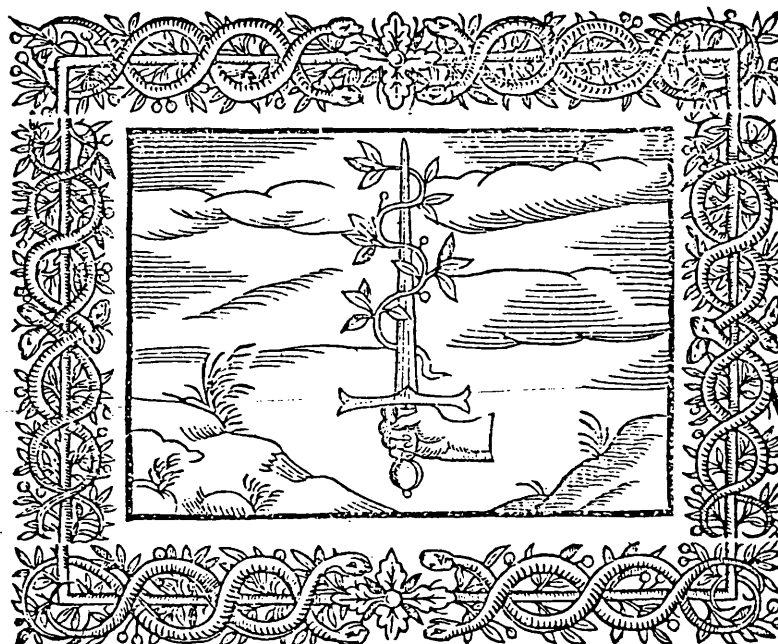
44



48. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna, or a garden of heroical Devises* (London, 1612)  
'*Quae pondere maior*', p.44

43

*Praemio et poena.*



49. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna, or a garden of heroical Devises* (London, 1612)  
'*Praemio et poena*', p.43

theme in Shakespeare's plays. What is important is the balance, nothing must be allowed to attain such prominence that it outweighs the equilibrium of the whole. To the Elizabethans balance was a vital element in the health of the constitution, both in the body of man and in the body politic. Man's health depended on an equal balance between the four humours; any imbalance, an excess of one of the humours, would cause illness and decline. Moderation was the ideal, and any surfeit was considered dangerous. Portia tries to subdue the excess of emotional joy which she feels when Bassanio picks the right casket:

How all the other passions fleet to air,  
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embrac'd despair,  
And shudd'ring fear, and green-ey'd jealousy!  
O love, be moderate, allay thy ecstasy,  
In measure rain thy joy, scant this excess!  
I feel too much thy blessing. Make it less,  
For fear I surfeit.

(III ii 108-114)

Shylock makes no attempt to restrain his passion, rather he revels in it, working himself up to a pitch at which his obsession has outweighed his reason and his sense of self-preservation. His lack of moderation will destroy him.

No critic seems as yet to have noticed that the word 'peize' which Dyce amended to 'peise' and which Portia uses in III ii 22-24 when talking to Bassanio:

I speak too long, but 'tis to peize the time,  
To eke it, and to draw it out in length,  
To stay you from election.

is the exact word used by Peacham in his emblem *Quae pondere maior* which is illustrated by a woodcut of a pair of balances which weigh war and worldly fame (represented by a cannon) in one pan, against literature and immortal fame (represented by a pen and wreath) in the other; the latter tips the balance down [Illustration 48].<sup>58</sup> The emblem appears directly opposite the illustration of the Sword of Justice [Illustration 49], and begins:

Behold a hand, extended from the sky;  
Doth steddilie a peized ballance hold.<sup>59</sup>

Combe also uses the term in two emblems. The first relates balance to judgement:

*Use iustice still with due regard,  
Respect no person nor reward.*

The Proverb saith, a man must never passe  
Nor peize his ballance with unequall weights;



As once in Rome a happie custome was,  
 Where equity maintained without sleights,  
 And iustice was the Monarks looking glasse,  
 Till avarice possessed their conceits.  
 Then civill discord set their hearts at warre,  
 And caused each man his owne good to marre.<sup>60</sup>

John Russell Brown in his Arden edition makes the note that 'the usual senses of weigh, weight, or balance are unsatisfactory'<sup>61</sup> but Portia's use of the word is easily understood in the light of Combe's verse: the word is used to mean adding extra weight in order to benefit one's self. Portia is metaphorically putting her thumb on the scale in order to increase the time she has with Bassanio. In addition to this Portia is balancing the time she has with Bassanio before he makes his choice of casket with the unknown time she has with him afterwards. In a play in which so much hinges on balance or imbalance, and in which the attributes of Justice are so prominent, it is little wonder that Shakespeare puts such a word into the mouth of the character who is ultimately to restore the balance at the end of the play. It may not, therefore, be coincidental that the word comes at almost exactly the halfway point of the play.

Combe's other use of the word is an interesting one, for it combines several elements which are central to *The Merchant of Venice*. The verse is accompanied by a woodcut of a woman holding a pair of unequally balanced scales:

*In friends this difference sole is tryde,  
 True friends stand fast, the fained slide.*

False faith is over-peisd with smallest weight,  
 The ballance yeelds unto the lightest fether:  
 The fained guest will quickly change conceit,  
 And in a trice will hither turne and thither.  
 But the sound friend will never sound retreit,  
 Nor stoope his sailes for any force of weather,  
 But constantly his friendship stil doth last,  
 And shine the clearer in the bitter blast.<sup>62</sup>

In this single emblem we have scales and balance, false friendship, true friendship and ship imagery, all linked together to make one emblem.

The balance between worldly and spiritual wealth, friendship and love, justice and mercy, appearance and reality are all vital themes in the play, and to underline their importance, the scales make a physical appearance in the trial scene where they are to be used to weigh Antonio's flesh, and Portia emphasises the importance of the exactness of that weighing. What is in fact being weighed is Shylock's justice against Portia's mercy and,

like King Belshazzar<sup>63</sup>, Shylock has been 'wayed in the balance, and art found to light'. The scales serve to emphasise the polarity of the two worlds of Belmont and Venice: to the world of commerce, the weight of anything can be measured in money; Shylock regards the function of the scales as the practical measurement of the material, while Portia and Bassanio see them as a means of measurement of intangible qualities and virtues. Portia's love cannot be bought, but neither can she buy time by juggling the weights. In a sense she is herself in the balance; she stands for sacrifice, waiting to be redeemed by her hero from the position imposed by her father. Her two earlier suitors, Morocco and Arragon, fail to realise that it is not sufficient to put in the balance only a small part of themselves - their reasoning or their minds - they must do what Bassanio does and put themselves whole-heartedly in, and make a commitment of *themselves*, so that the image created is of Portia and Bassanio sitting in the pans of the scales and being weighed against each other. Bassanio wins Portia because he balances her exactly; he is her equal: Shylock loses his contest with her because he cannot balance her. Her virtues are more valuable than his vices, and so she outweighs him.

## 2.g.ii. The sword

While Shylock holds one traditional attribute of Justice, the set of scales, Shakespeare has warped the other attribute of the sword into a dagger. The sword is a common emblem in portraits of Queen Elizabeth I in her role as Justice. Interestingly, she is never seen with the scales, and Chew suggests that this indicated that

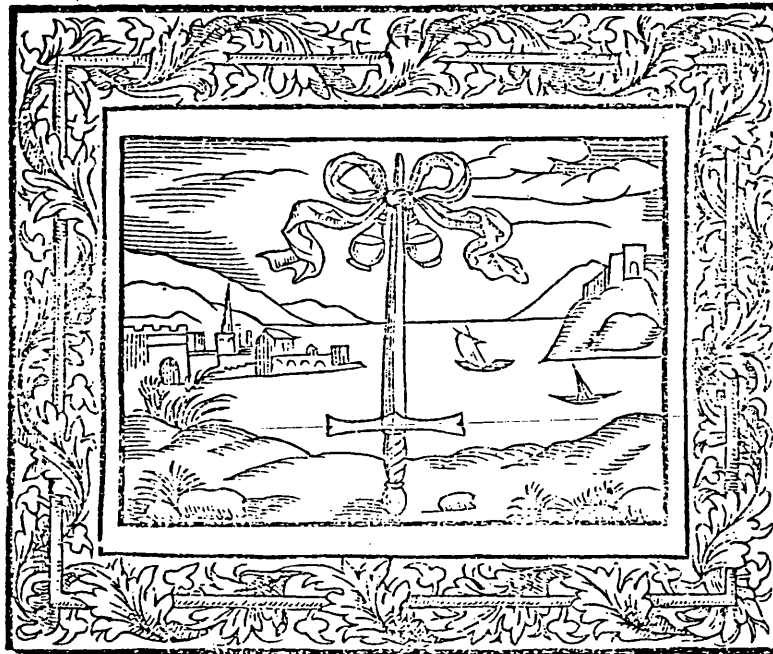
Elizabethan Justice is retributive; perhaps remedial and corrective, but perhaps also vengeful; in function not always distinguishable from Nemesis; more concerned to punish the wrongdoer than to satisfy the righteous claims of the innocent.<sup>64</sup>

Whitney appends a special motto to his *Silentium* which is addressed to Elizabeth in her role as the dispenser of national justice:

I See, and houlde my peace: a Princelie Poësie righte,  
For everie faulte, shoulde not provoke, a Prince, or man of mighte.  
For if that IOVE shoulde shoote, so ofte as men offende,  
The Poëttes saie, his thunderboltes shoulde soone bee at an ende.  
Then happie wee that have, a Princesse so inclin'de  
That when as iustice drawes hir sworde, hath mercie in her minde,  
And to declare the same, howe prone shee is to save:  
Her Maiestie did make her choice, this Poësie for to have  
*Sed piger ad pœnas princeps, ad præmia velox:*  
*Cuique dolet, quoties cogitur esse ferox.*<sup>65</sup>

The Sword of Justice was seen by the Elizabethans as a *weapon* which should be used on occasion to punish. P.S.'s translation of Paradin makes

83

*Vulnerat ille medemur.*

50. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna, or a garden of heroical Devises* (London, 1612)  
*'Vulnerat ille medemur'*, p.83



51. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635)  
*'Lex Regit et arma tuentur'*, Book 1, Emblem III, p.3

it clear that a strong ruler must wield such a weapon in order to retain control of his or her people:

The iust and upright administration of iustice, with the due punishment of the wicked, is a thing so necessarie to kingdomes, people, and Countries, that if they should bee taken away, the companies and societies of men would soone fall to decaie and bee destroyed. Wherefore Rulers and Magistrates may rightlie challenge the sworde to them-selves, with publike and private honours, as warranted by the word of God, that they may bee not onelie a helpe and a comfort to the godlike and meeke, but also a feare and terroure to the wicked.<sup>66</sup>

Modern audiences need to temper their sympathetic reactions to Shylock's sentence with the realisation that Elizabethan justice could often be much more severe than that seen in Shakespeare's Venetian court.

The sword symbolised strength and liberty and the power to enforce law, while at the same time remaining honourable, and its associations with the Word of God made it a spiritual symbol as well. Peacham shows this in his emblem *Vulnerat ille medemur* [Illustration 50] which is surmounted by a woodcut of a sword with ribbons tied around the point against a background lake with boats and a village on the left and a church on the right:

This Sword, a Symbole of the Law, doth threate  
Perpetuall death, to all of *Adams* race:  
But yet th'Almightie, of his mercie greate,  
Sendes, after sentence, pardon of his grace:  
For when he found us, maimed on the ground,  
With wine, and oile of grace, he heald the wound.

Our partes it is, since by the Law we see,  
The fearefull state, and daunger we are in,  
To doe our best, then to his mercie flee,  
And new againe, our sinfull lives begin:  
Not trusting to our deedes, and merits vaine,  
Since nought but death, doth due to these remaine.<sup>67</sup>

Wither also emphasises the punitive, as well as protective role of the sword in his emblem *The Law is given to direct; The Sword, to punish and protect* [Illustration 51] where the law is associated with tablets of stone given to Moses:

When God Almighty first engrav'd in stone  
His holy Law, He did not give the same  
As if some common Act had then beene done,  
For, arm'd with Fires and Thunders, forth it came.  
By which, that great Law-maker might inferre  
What dreadfull Vengeance would on those attend,  
Who did against those holy Precepts erre;  
And, that, his Power, well-doers could defend.  
Thereto, this Emblem, also doth agree;

For, loe, before the Tables of the Lawe,  
 A naked Sword is borne, whose use may bee  
 As well to keepe in Safety, as in Awe.  
 Whence, Princes (if they please) this note may take,  
 (And it shall make them happily to raigne)  
 That, many good and wholesome Lawes to make  
 Without an Executioner, is vaine ...  
 ... For, As by Lawes a Land is kept in frame;  
 So, Armes is that, which must protect the same.<sup>68</sup>

Although the Sword of Justice is sometimes called a knife, as in Whitney's emblem *Festina lente* where he enjoins

The Prince, or Iudge, maie not with lighte reporte  
 In doubtfull thinges, give iudgement touching life:  
 But trie, and learne the truthe in everie sorte,  
 And mercie loyne, with iustice bloodie knife.<sup>69</sup>

the dagger that Shylock wields is emblematic of the opposite qualities to the sword. Whereas the sword was an open and honourable weapon, the dagger was the instrument of secret assassination and murder. As J. E. Cirlot says, the knife is a

symbol which is the inversion of sword-symbolism. It is associated with vengeance and death, but also with sacrifice. The short blade of the knife represents, by analogy, the primacy of the instinctive forces in the man wielding it, whereas the long blade of the sword illustrates the spiritual height of the swordsman.<sup>70</sup>

The dagger was the weapon of deceit and treachery, assassination and ambition, and in its relation to the tradition that it was the weapon used by Cain to kill Able, it was accepted as symbolic of Envy. In a set of engravings by Philip Galle of c1600 the conventional depictions of the Seven Deadly Sins show the dagger as an attribute of Wrath. Shylock is guilty of all these, and the dagger is therefore an entirely suitable attribute for him to be associated with. In this regard, his claim to represent Justice becomes suspect. Indeed, if he truly did represent that virtue, he would accept the judgement made on him by the Duke and Portia without any quibble. Shylock's warped view of justice stems from his anger and pride. He becomes more and more irrational through the play, and the balanced, sane function of the Sword of Justice is transformed into a weapon of personal revenge in the hands of a madman. Alciati has an emblem which represents the sword of a madman which uses the image of Ajax slaying pigs in his anger, instead of the descendants of Tantalus. It ends:

Rage knows not how to come to grips with its own enemies;  
 its blow misses the mark, and lacking in judgement, it rushes to  
 its own destruction.<sup>71</sup>

## 2.g.iii. The blindfold

The other common attribute of Justice is the blindfold, as can be seen in Ripa's emblem 188 of 'Justice' [Illustration 52]. In its positive aspect this indicates impartiality and may be what Portia is demonstrating when she asks

Which is the merchant here; and which the Jew? (IV i 169)

when visually their identities should be apparent. Shakespeare uses very similar words in *King Lear* in a darker and more terrifying context when Lear, having been blind to his daughters' true worth, closes his mind in madness and meets the literally blind Gloucester:

which is the justice, which is the thief? (*King Lear* IV vi 154)

In *Lear* blindness leads, paradoxically, to a more clear-sighted appraisal of the true situation, just as Justice's blindfold allows her to judge clearly and impartially, but the blindfold also has a negative aspect in that it can indicate narrow-mindedness, ignorance, or the *refusal* to see, and all these Shylock is guilty of. He refuses to see what Portia is trying to show, that generosity, both in money and in spirit, is necessary for growth. Whitney begins his emblem on 'Blind Hatred'

Th' Envious man, when neighbours howse dothe flame,  
Whose chiefe delighte, is in an others harme,  
Doth shutte his eies, and will nott see the same.<sup>72</sup>

Shylock is envious of the good fortune, wealth and standing of Antonio, and is also stubborn and blind to his own best interests. The danger of wilful blindness is that it is possible to fall into one's own trap. Marquale's Italian translation of Alciati's emblem *Iusta vindicta* ends with the sentence 'Thus fate leads the wicked man to blindness, and thus punishment falls on its author'.<sup>73</sup> and Wither uses the proverbial

For, what are lights to those who blinded bee  
Or, whoso blinde, as they that will not see.<sup>74</sup>

Shylock's envy and greed blind him to the benefits of liberality. Antonio, gives freely for his friend with no thought of profit, and Bassanio hazards all he has and both have riches returned to them - Antonio his ships and Bassanio Portia and her wealth - while Shylock, in an effort to keep what is legally, if not morally, his loses nearly everything. Ecclesiastes' advice

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for after manie dayes thou shalt  
finde it. (Ecclesiastes, 11. 1)

is here shown in action.



52. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
'Justice', no.188, p.47



53. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
'Divine Justice', no.142, p.36

Like Mercy, Portia is gentle. She is firm and direct, but does not rant or lose her temper and at all times retains a quiet logical approach to the trial. Shylock, on the other hand, is guilty of the sin of Wrath. The two in this respect resemble the opposition of the Virtues and the Vices in the morality plays. While the Virtue remains aloof and calm, and speaks with dignity and reason, the Vice is acidic and energetic, often using much coarser language and unfortunately is usually the more interesting because of the vitality which is embodied in the enthusiasm for evil schemes and plots. Shakespeare is fully aware of this tradition, as can be seen in his vibrant presentation of Richard III, who conforms closely to the medieval Vice of the morality plays, and shares their vitality and insidious attraction. The danger is that the Vice becomes *too* attractive, and although no critic has seriously made a case for a lovable Shylock, the play has often been criticised for the disproportionate interest engendered by Shylock, as he is evidently not intended to be the hero. His asides and general presentation as a scheming, raging villain who ultimately gets his comeuppance are all consonant with the figure of the Vice, and the intensity of the presentation can endanger the balance of the play. For this reason, Shylock must be portrayed, not only as a villain, but as repulsive both physically and morally, and without the seductive wit of Richard III, or the play becomes too heavily weighted in favour of his character.

### 3. The Old Law and the New Law

While Portia and Shylock can be seen as standing for Mercy and Justice, they also relate to the New and the Old Law. Ripa conflates Justice and Christianity in his emblem on *Divine Justice* [Illustration 53] which shows:

A handsom Woman, with a Golden Crown on her Head; a Dove, with Rays above; her Hair loose about her; a naked Sword in her right Hand, in her left the Balance, the Globe of the World at her Feet.

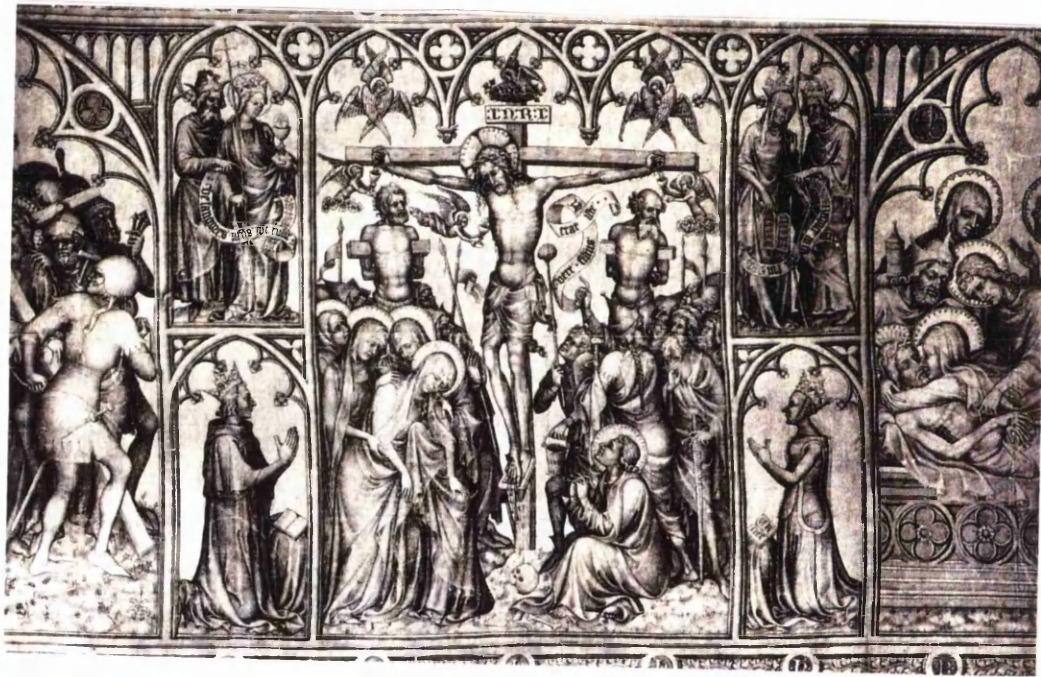
The Crown and Globe shew her *Power* over the World; the Balance shews *Justice*, and the Sword, the *Punishment* of Malefactors; the Dove represents the *Holy Ghost*.<sup>76</sup>

and his emblem on *Injustice* [Illustration 46] shows:

A Man in a white Garment full of Spots; a Sword in one Hand, and a Goblet in the other; the Tables of the Law all broken to pieces, on the Ground; blind of the right Eye, and tramples on the Balance.

His Garment denotes Injustice to be the *Corruption* and *Stain* of the Mind. The Laws broken, the Non-observance of them, being despis'd by *Malefactors*; and the due weighing of Matters *neglected*, intimated by the Balance. The blind Eye shews that he sees only with the left; that is, his *own Interest*.<sup>76</sup>





54. *The Parement of Narbonne* (shortly before 1377)  
detail, painted silk altar frontal, Louvre, Paris

In both of these emblems symbols associated with Justice and Mercy are mingled with the attributes of the Old and New Law.

While Mercy is not identical with the New Law or the Christian interpretation of the Bible, she is strongly associated with it. To sixteenth century theologians Mercy and Charity were sometimes conflated and the passage known as the 'Love' chapter in I Corinthians, 13. 1-13 sees the virtue of Mercy/Charity/Love as the highest expression of Christian living. The Old Law as passed down in the tablets by Moses, is the law of Justice; a hard, exacting law which demanded rigid observance of ritual as prescribed in the Scriptures. The difference between the two formed the chasm between Judaism and Christianity. The first was based on Justification, the idea that heaven could be obtained by following a set of divine laws as expressed by the prophets and the Scriptures, and it has already been shown that this is the theology to which Shylock subscribes. Christianity preached Salvation and Redemption; man could not be saved by his own actions; by himself he was a sinner and unworthy of a place in heaven, but this could be achieved by the intervention of a divine act, the grace of God, which could not be earned by observing the law, but must be freely given and as freely accepted. The exchange between the Duke and Shylock in IV i 88-89 already quoted demonstrates the difference between the two theologies; they are speaking different languages and neither has the ability to understand the other. These two principles of Old and New Law came to be personified in the plastic arts in the figures of Ecclesia and Synagoga.

#### 4. Synagoga and Ecclesia

Depictions of Ecclesia and Synagoga are common in the Middle Ages, and from this time on, the two figures appear frequently in manuscripts and ivories, and are often associated with the Crucifixion scene. As in the trial scene, Justice and Mercy, Old Law and New Law, Synagoga and Ecclesia are always paired together. The frequent occurrence of Synagoga and Ecclesia in depictions of the Crucifixion, one on either side of the hanging body of Christ, as in *The Parement de Narbonne*<sup>27</sup> (before 1377) [Illustration 54], bring to mind the stage picture of Shylock and Portia arguing over the half-stripped body of Antonio, the former standing for death and the latter for life.



55. 'The Crucifixion and Deposition, with the Church and the Synagogue',  
*The Psalter of Blanche of Castile* (c1235)  
Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, Ms 1186 f.24

Wolfgang Seiferth describes an ivory book cover where Ecclesia points

to Synagoga's forehead, indicating that the source of salvation will be there in the future and not in the *knife of circumcision* which Synagoga holds in her left hand.<sup>78</sup>

As has been shown above, Shylock's association with the dagger is complex, but this could represent yet another element in its presentation. The knife in this context represents a misguided faith in the Old Law, the belief that obeying the law was the only thing necessary to salvation. As the play shows, Shylock is mistaken in this. His literal interpretation of, and determination to stick to the law are his downfall. As St. Paul says to his fellow Christians in Corinth

In that ye are manifest, to be the epistle of Christ, ministred by us, and written not, with inck, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart ... Not that we are sufficient of our selves, to thinke any thing, as of our selves: but our sufficiencie is of God. Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: *for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.*

(II Corinthians, 3. 3, 5-6) (my italics)

Later representations commonly show as the attributes of Ecclesia a crown, a chalice and a banner and as those of Synagoga a toppling crown, the tablets of the law which she is letting slip from her hands and a broken lance as in the illustration of the Crucifixion and Deposition from the so-called Psalter of Blanche of Castile<sup>79</sup> (c1235) [Illustration 55]. Invariably Synagoga is placed on Christ's left hand side:

Significantly, she stands on the side of death - the wages of sin. The contrast between Christian and Jew is clearly articulated as a contradiction; it is as irreconcilable as life and death.<sup>80</sup>

Shylock's plot means death to Antonio and the wages of his, Shylock's, sin is indeed death. That he does not pay the ultimate price is entirely due to the charity of the Christians, his enemies.

Initially the two allegorical figures were shown in balance and as equals. Ecclesia and Synagoga both appear as impressive Queens, and Ecclesia supplants Synagoga with sympathy, gentleness and dignity. She removes the veil from Synagoga's eyes, symbolising the ultimate conversion of the Jews which, according to the Bible, would herald the second coming and the final judgement. The Jews were viewed as misguided, rather than inherently evil, but by the sixteenth century

the symbol, robbed of its original idea, had become a means of expressing anger at medieval Jewry.<sup>81</sup>

and this anti-Semitic flavour becomes the predominant symbolism. The



theological debate had turned into personal animosity as the symbolic figures in the drama and literature became personified as real people:

This personification of a religious principle ... and the rejection of Synagoga, projects this principle to the level of real life: the symbols become reality; medieval Jewry is identified with the alleged failure of the Old Testament doctrine and made responsible for it.<sup>92</sup>

By the thirteenth century the two figures were appearing in stained-glass and monumental statuary as well as the minor arts, and Synagoga is shown attempting an attack on Ecclesia with her spear, which breaks. She is often shown wearing the pointed hat which became the attribute of all Jews and sometimes carries at her waist a purse symbolising avarice and usury, and perhaps Judas's thirty pieces of silver.<sup>93</sup> An illustration in a Bible historiée of the fifteenth century shows

Moses with the broken tablets in one hand and the new tablets in the other, while Synagoga lies on the ground and Ecclesia herself holds aloft the new tablets ... the old tablets must be broken, Moses and Synagoga must die, and the law loses its force among the *judeis* ... The promise of the New Covenant is, however, already contained in the Old: Christ and Ecclesia gaze down sympathetically at the dead Synagoga.<sup>94</sup>

Shylock, the representation of the Old Law, must be broken by Portia in her character of Ecclesia in order that the new Covenant may develop. It would be wrong to think that Portia is gloatingly triumphant over her victory, however. Shylock has forced her into being severe by his refusal to countenance mercy, but she is prepared to allow him what leniency she can according to the law he has himself invoked, as is evidenced by her words 'What mercy can you render him, Antonio?' (IV i 373-4)

#### 4.a. Synagoga's veil

Synagoga is often shown with a veil or blindfold, as in the statue on Strasbourg Cathedral clock tower (1220-1230). The blindfold represents the negative of Justice's impartial blindness and, like Shylock's psychological blindfold, symbolises Synagoga's self-imposed blindness, her refusal to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah, and accept the New Law. Ripa portrays *Error* [Illustration 56] as

A Man in a Pilgrims Habit, groping his Way blind-fold.

The Cloth blinding him signifies mans Falling into *Error*, when his Mind is darkened by *wordly* Concerns; the Staff, his being apt to *stumble*, if he take not the Guides of the Spirit, and of right Reason.<sup>95</sup>

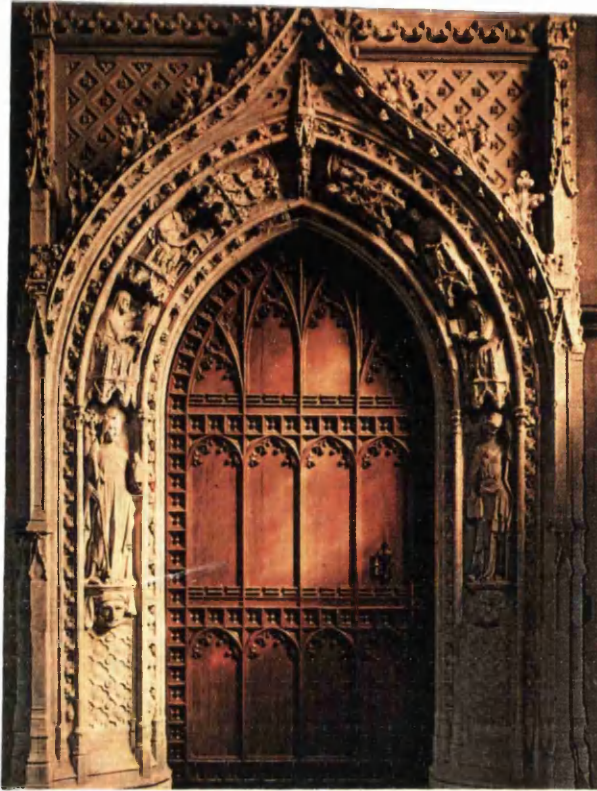
St. Paul saw Christ's teaching and death as the means of rending the veil which hid God from the eyes of sinful man, and the Jews, by rejecting that



56. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (English translation 1709)  
'Error', no.107, p.27



57. 'The Tree of Jesse', *The Lambeth Bible* (c1150?)  
578 x 353 mm, Lambeth Palace Library, London, Ms 3



58. Fourteenth century doorway, Rochester Cathedral  
a, doorway



b, Ecclesia



c, Synagoga

teaching and sacrifice, were still spiritually blind.<sup>86</sup> The Lambeth Bible<sup>87</sup> (cl150?) has a Tree of Jesse [Illustration 56] which brings together a representation of the Four Daughters of God debate with depictions of Ecclesia and Synagoga. In this illustration the veil is being drawn away from Synagoga's face by a hand reaching from above, representing God's hand. Portia attempts to remove Shylock's spiritual blindfold, and like Ecclesia, she acts with dignity and calm, although when he proves intractable, she becomes relentless. His final forced conversion is a violent ripping away of his self-imposed veil: gentleness and reason have proved unavailing, but the implication is that, for his own good, he must be forced to see the light. His salvation from death is the result of the application of the Christian mercy which he has reviled and rejected, and his final confusion and silence may indicate his reluctant realisation of this, the fact that his theological system has failed him, while that of the Christians has not only triumphed over him, but also saved his life.

#### 4.b. The prophet plays

It was a common idea that Synagoga was driven off into outer darkness. The *Sermo contra Judeos, Paganos et Arianos, de Symbolo*, wrongly ascribed to St. Augustine,<sup>88</sup> presents a debate between Judaism, Paganism and Christianity concerning who is the rightful ruler of the world. The framework is set in a court, and this idea later developed into the prophet plays in which prophets are brought forward as witnesses for the prosecution against the Jews who have to justify their denial of Christ.

Gradually the prophet play developed into a trial with two central figures, the Jewish elder Archisynagogus and the Reader (often St. Augustine). Later on these figures metamorphosised into Ecclesia and Synagoga who were first brought together in the drama in the *Ludus de Antichristo* or Antichrist plays written in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>89</sup>

In England, examples of Ecclesia/Synagoga statuary are often found placed on either side of a doorway: at Rochester Cathedral a fourteenth century doorway which now frames the entrance of the chapter house shows the Christian and Jewish dispensations [Illustration 58]. Ecclesia has been 'restored', but much of Synagoga is original. She carries a shattered banner, two slipping tablets and is blindfolded. At either side of the south door of the choir at Lincoln cathedral are headless statues both with their right arms missing but, as one carries the model of the church



and the other what seem to be tablets, they can with some confidence be identified with Ecclesia and Synagoga. Edward Schroder Prior and Arthur Gardner<sup>90</sup> have identified a similar figure at Crowland Abbey, and at Howden, Yorkshire in the church of SS. Peter and Paul the two figures appear on the choir screen to which they have been removed at some time from another, probably external, location. Antonio's other aspect as Everyman can be related to these figures which stand on either side of a portal through which everyday man must pass. Antonio survives the passage between the two to emerge reborn and is rewarded when he no longer expects anything, by the return of his ships. Christians passing through the portal into the church gained not material wealth but spiritual riches in the worship they found within:

Blessed are the poore in spirit, for theirs is the kingdome of heaven.

Blessed are the meke: for they shal inherite the earth.

Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obtaine mercie.

(Matthew, 5. 3, 5, 7)

Appendix A  
THE HISTORY OF ANATOMY

1.        **Anatomy from Ancient times to the Renaissance**

In order to discuss the iconographic possibilities of Antonio as an anatomy subject, it is important to understand the place that the study of anatomy had in the Elizabethan world picture.

The history of anatomy dates from ancient times. Aristotle (384-322 BC) founded comparative anatomy, dissecting many animals but not the human body. He made some drawings illustrating anatomical descriptions, but made no distinction between arteries and veins and failed to trace relations between sense organs, nerves and the brain. Contrary to popular thought and his teacher, Plato, he regarded the *heart* as the seat of intelligence and the brain simply as an organ for cooling the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Around 300 BC an Alexandrian School of anatomy emerged when Herophilus of Chalcedon was probably the first to dissect the human body in public. He recognised the *brain* as the central organ of the nervous system and seat of intelligence. He distinguished between veins and arteries and connected the nerves with motion and sensation.<sup>2</sup>

1.a.      **Galen of Pergamon**

The most famous of the ancient anatomists was Galen of Pergamon (129-99 AD) who was, at 21, studying anatomy at Smyrna. Mainly he dissected animals (preferring the rhesus monkey) because human dissection was no longer practised, but he had seen the human skeleton, and there are indications in his writings that he had done *some* human dissection. He was indebted to the Greek texts based on the teachings of the Greek physician, Hippocrates, (c460-399 BC) (whose teaching extended over all Greece, but whose school was based at the shrine of Asclepius at Cos), and the writings of Aristotle and followed the latter's principle that all structures of the body were formed by the Creator for a known and intelligible end. Galen therefore sought to justify every organ or part thereof with reference to the function for which he believed it to be destined. This had much in common with the Stoic philosophy that all things were predestined by forces acting outside Man and that all things worked to the rule of the heavenly bodies. Galen was not wholly in accord with Stoicism but his theories later appealed strongly to both Islamic and

Christian theologies.<sup>3</sup> His most accurate descriptions were of muscles and he showed an occasional awareness of differences in certain human and animal muscles. He described the *rete mirabile*, a network of fine vessels on the undersurface of the brain, and for over thirteen centuries anatomists, following Galen, insisted on the existence of this in man. It is, in fact found in the brains of animals, mainly the hooved species, but *not* in humans.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.b. The teaching of anatomy at Bologna

At Galen's death anatomical and physiological inquiry ceased until during the Middle Ages when the anatomical texts by Galen and his predecessors, such as Herophilus of Chalcedon, were translated from Greek into Arabic and Latin, annotated and rearranged but with no original work. With the rise of the Universities during the thirteenth century medical faculties became common, but teaching was purely theoretical, with no clinical experience. At Bologna a medical faculty was established in 1156 and the first dissection took place in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, but this was for verification rather than exploration. An early Bolognese surgeon, William of Salicero (c1210-c1280) wrote a treatise on surgery with a section on anatomy taken from Arabic writings, but surgery was normally only employed in emergencies.<sup>5</sup>

Taddeo Alderotti (1223-1303) known as Thaddeus of Florence, taught at Bologna and understood the importance of access to Greek sources. He gives occasional hints of post mortem examination in his *Consilia* and taught all the first generation of writers who openly refer to dissection - Bartolomeo de Varigiana (d. 1318), Henri de Mondeville (1260?-1325?) and Mundinus (1275?-1326).<sup>6</sup> Henri de Mondeville took Bolognese surgical, medical and anatomical traditions to Montpellier in 1301<sup>7</sup> thus spreading the interest in anatomy and dissection further into the rest of Europe.

#### 1.c. The first post mortem

Until 1306 the medical faculty was seen as an adjunct to the faculty of law and the first post mortems were carried out for forensic purposes. The earliest frank account of a post mortem was in 1296, (although autopsies were probably being conducted at least thirty years before), by Salimbene of Parma (1221-1290?).<sup>8</sup> It describes the opening of a corpse by a physician in Cremona to discover the cause of a disease, but he seems only to have opened the thorax and glanced at the heart. The first formal

report of a post mortem is dated 1302 and was done on one, Azzolina, who died in Bologna and was suspected of having been poisoned. Two physicians and three surgeons with Bartolomeo de Variguana at their head were present.<sup>9</sup> At about the same time appears the first illustration which can be definitely identifies as being of a post mortem, and which may be French or Anglo-Norman.<sup>10</sup>

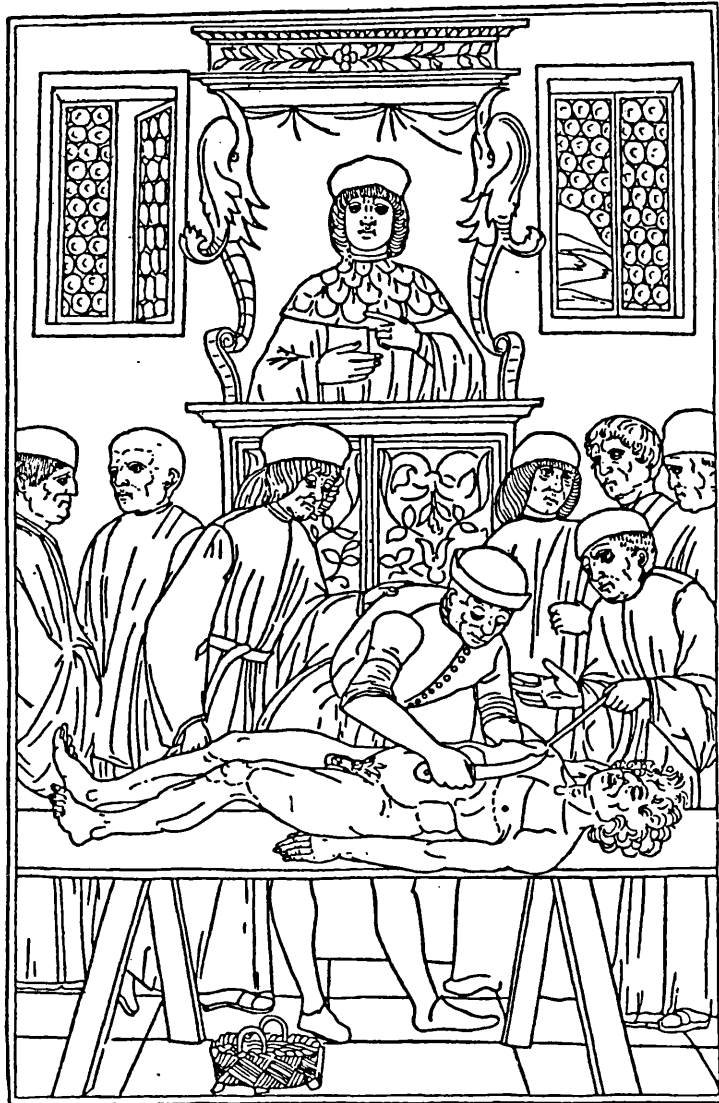
#### 1.d. **Mundinus**

Henri de Mondeville's fellow student, Mondino de'Luzzi (1275?-1326), known as Mundinus, worked systematically at anatomy and dissected the human body in public. His first male autopsy seems to have been in 1281 and his first female autopsy in 1312,<sup>11</sup> and in 1316 he wrote a treatise on anatomy, the *Anothomia*, which was essentially a practical manual. This became the standard work on anatomy up to the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> It was based on a translation of Galen's *On the Function of the Members* which, although faulty, was the only version of Galen's writings which was available to Mundinus.<sup>13</sup> He seems to have seen most of what he describes but makes no attempt to be original, the aim being demonstration rather than discovery. Anatomies performed for the benefit of students were intended to help them memorise the orthodox anatomical texts rather than question their findings, and were designed as *aide memoires* rather than as research tools.

Mundinus' order of dissection was:

1. Abdomen and viscera - 'since, to begin with, these members are fetid, and on this account we should make a start with them, in order that we may be able to throw them away as soon as possible'
2. Thorax and organs (lungs and heart)
3. Head and its contents with the sense organs
4. Extremities, muscles and bones.<sup>14</sup>

Mundinus, it should be noted, dissected *personally*. As dissection became a formal inclusion in the curriculum, his successors withdrew from the body, lecturing from a high professorial chair (*cathedra*) while a menial steward did the dirty work under the guidance of the ostensor or demonstrator who pointed out the structures with his wand, and the students observed, taking no active part themselves. This meant that the lecturers were no longer physically involved in dissection and the subject became even more academic and formal. An early collection of medical tracts, the *Fasciculus*



59. *Fasciculus di Medicinæ* (1493)

This picture forms the first page of an Italian translation  
of the *Anothomia* by Mundinus

*Medicinae* first printed in Venice in 1491, has in its 1493 edition a particularly good illustration of an academic anatomy.<sup>15</sup> [Illustration 59]

#### 1.e. Dissection outside the Universities

Although the practice of dissection was concentrated mostly in the universities where it was used as an adjunct to lectures in order to aid the students' memories, anatomies were also carried out elsewhere. Nicolaus Massa's treatise *Liber introductorius anatomiae*, published in 1536 in Venice, was a mid-point between the writings of Berengarius and Vesalius. In it Massa insists upon the importance of frequent dissection and states that he has personally been involved in dissections in Venice (which did not boast a university) at the hospital of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, or in the convent of Saint John and Saint Paul.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1.f. Religious objections to dissection

There does seem to have been a certain amount of religious objection to dissection. A Papal Bull of Boniface VIII issued in 1300 excommunicated anyone who boiled the flesh off bones to stamp out the practice of transporting the bones of distinguished Crusaders home.<sup>17</sup> This was a common practice among anatomists which alleviated the offensiveness caused by the rapidity of decomposition, and enabled the anatomists to study elements which were obscured in normal decomposition, and as a final result provided clean bones for the study of the skeleton. Although the Bull was not directed at the anatomists it told against them and in addition, surgery and any attempt to improve knowledge for that purpose was considered impious. Illness was regarded as an Act of God, sent to punish wickedness, and should be borne with humility as being beneficial to the soul. In a Brief of Sixtus IV (Pope 1471-84) the opening of bodies was recognised conditional on ecclesiastical permission and this was confirmed by Clement VII (Pope 1523-32).<sup>18</sup> This of course did not affect England after her split with Rome.

#### 1.g. Popular prejudice against dissection:

##### 1.g.1. Vivisection and Berengarius

In addition to religious objections to dissection, popular prejudice against anatomists also caused problems. It was a common superstition that anatomists vivisected as well as dissected, and while this is undoubtedly true in the case of animals, there is no evidence to support human vivisection. In one case it was believed that Berengario da Carpi (c 1460-

1530), commonly known as Berengarius, had to leave Bologna where he was the Lecturer in Surgery, precipitately in 1526, due to his vivisection of two Spaniards. The story is told by Fallopius (1523-1562) in his *De Morbo Gallico*, printed in 1563 in Padua, in a tone that indicates that it was already a well established rumour:

This man so hated Spaniards that, when he was at Bologna, he took twin Spaniards suffering from syphilis and determined to practice vivisection on them: being ruined for this reason, he went to Ferrara.<sup>19</sup>

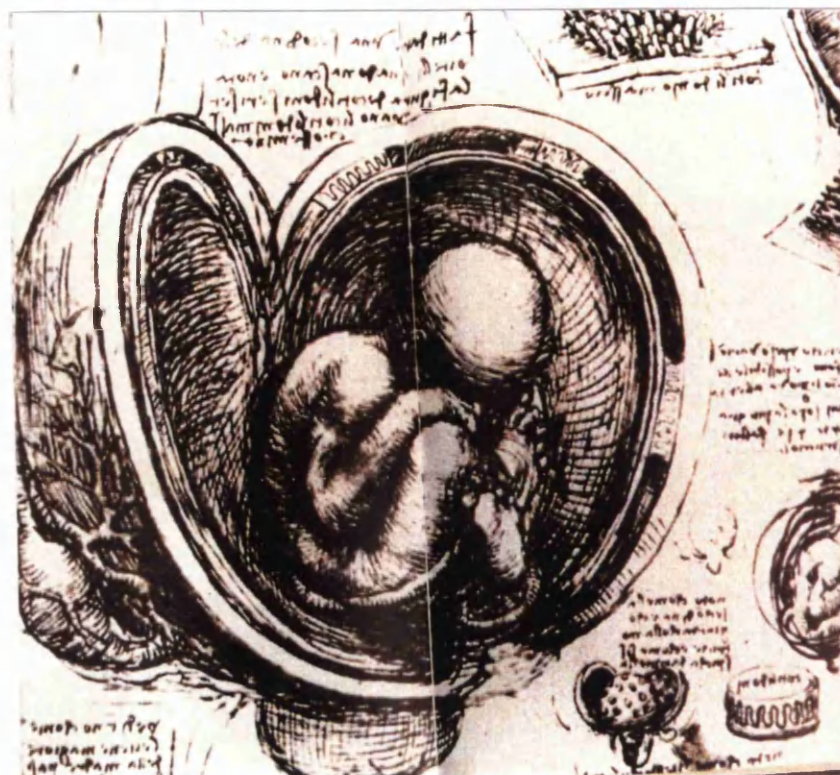
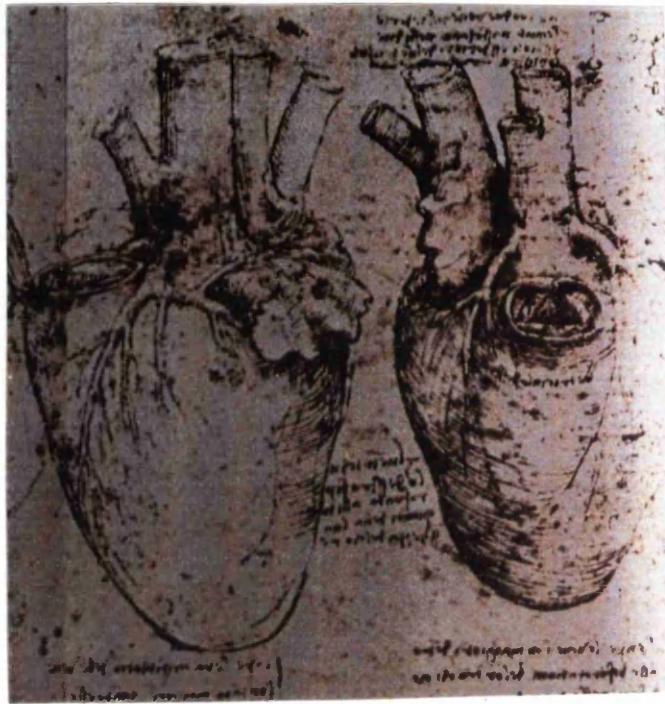
It seems likely that this is actually an interpolation from elsewhere in Fallopius' writings, for Berengarius seems to have been too shrewd to have risked such a dangerous operation and his abrupt flight is more likely to have been due to famine, or the invasion of Bourbon troops, but there can be no doubt that vivisection was a common accusation, and Fallopius' comment, if erroneously attached to Berengarius, is evidence of the existence of popular credence in such rumours. Berengarius' personality may have encouraged the connection of this story with his name, as he seems to have had a violent and rather unsavoury character. In one documented incident in 1511<sup>20</sup> he, accompanied by his valet, attacked a Doctor Prospero da Forzano, who sought refuge in a nearby house owned by a Jew. In the ensuing quarrel the Jew's wife was wounded, but although the valet was fined for his part in the incident, Berengarius, due to the intervention of powerful friends in Bologna, escaped any punishment. His stay in Rome in 1526 left a residue of hostility, for his treatment of syphilis, which earned him a rapid reputation, was at best a temporary alleviation of the complaint and not a cure. Benvenuto Cellini, whom he treated while in Rome, describes him with some bitterness in his *Autobiography* saying

he only undertook a cure after stipulating for his fees, which he reckoned not by tens, but by hundreds of crowns ... He was a person of great sagacity, and did wisely to get out of Rome; for not many months afterwards, all the patients he had treated grew so ill that they were a hundred times worse off than before he came. He would certainly have been murdered if he had stopped.<sup>21</sup>

Cellini may be a biased witness, for he later remarks that he had made some cups for 'that charlatan Maestro Jacopo, the surgeon from Carpi' for which he felt he had not been paid to their full value.<sup>22</sup> Such a mountebank and adventurer would seem to be the kind to indulge his curiosity in some illicit vivisection, but his own comments indicate that he did not do so:

In our own time anatomy is not practiced on living bodies except by chance under the hands of physicians, as sometimes happens to me in





60. Leonardo da Vinci, Anatomy sketches



cutting into abscesses, operating on ulcers, or trepanning and perforating members of the body ... and it would be far better to ascertain the truth in live bodies than in dead ones except that we are restrained because of the cruelty this involves.<sup>23</sup>

#### 1.g.ii Vivisection and Andreas Vesalius

The story of an anatomist making an enforced flight for practising vivisection seems to be a recurring accusation, for Vesalius was charged with very much the same crime as Berengarius.<sup>24</sup> The story arose that his flight from Spain was due to his vivisection of a Spaniard, and, although no one seems to have remarked on the fact, the two rumours are so close that it is possible that they stem from the same source, now lost to us. Vesalius is even more unlikely to be guilty than Berengarius, but the story persisted and in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* Burton comments on it as a fact

to discern which the better, they say that Vesalius the Anatomist was wont to cut up men alive.<sup>25</sup>

What can be certain is that the mystery surrounding anatomy encouraged the common people to connect it with forbidden rites which both horrified and at the same time thrilled them. The taboo of vivisection, of a dispassionate dissection of a live body, touched a deep chord in the human psyche with its connotations of human sacrifice as found in the Bible in the stories of Isaac and Jephtha's daughter, and in the Classical legends of Iphigenia and Polyxena.

#### 1.h. Anatomy and the Renaissance artists

During the fifteenth century, the revival of learning resulted in accurate translations of the Greek of Galen and towards the end of the century *printed* copies of these appeared, resulting in a revival of interest in anatomy as text books became more accessible.<sup>26</sup> With the Renaissance, artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael<sup>27</sup> began to dissect the human body, and Leonardo worked on a book of anatomy and physiology with Mercantonio della Tore which, although never finished, contains remarkably accurate drawings which were unmatched for observation until the twentieth century, and artistically have never been superseded.<sup>28</sup> [Illustration 59] The relationship between anatomical study and the graphic arts is a particularly close one in the Renaissance. Artists of the period appear to have understood the workings of the human body even more clearly than the anatomists themselves, and were often called on to illustrate anatomical text books. The study of human anatomy was first

taught formally as an adjunct to the study of painting and sculpture by the Carracci brothers, Ludivico (1555-1619), Annibale (1560-1609) and Agostino (1557-1602/5) who founded the eclectic art school in Bologna, where Agostino taught human anatomy assisted by the anatomist Fantoni.<sup>29</sup> Michelangelo himself studied anatomy for twelve years while completing his artistic training, and was acquainted with the anatomist Realdo Colombo. He was kept well supplied with cadavers while working on the wooden crucifix for the cloister of S. Spirito, Florence, and his anatomical sketches include a sheet in Seroux d'Agincourt's *Histoire de l'art par les monumens* (Paris, 1811) which shows an anatomy being conducted by two men, one with a compass, the other with a knife in a gloomy room in which the only light source is a candle fixed in the middle of the lower part of the chest of the dissected man.<sup>30</sup>

#### 1.J. Public anatomies and private post mortems

Until the mid sixteenth century two different types of anatomy were practised. The grand public anatomies attracted large crowds and were the occasion for much feasting including as they did, among the spectators, noblemen and civic dignitaries. They were advertised by broadsheet (two survive from the mid-seventeenth century)<sup>31</sup> but do not seem to have contributed much to the advancement of knowledge. Any new discoveries in this area seem more likely to have come from the private anatomies which were performed by gifted amateurs, like Leonardo da Vinci, or surgeons at the request of the deceased's relatives. These post mortems were conducted on the bodies of highly respectable people and were usually directed at discovering the cause of death. (The bodies for the public anatomies, on the other hand, were provided exclusively from hanged felons.)

The formal, grand occasions of the public anatomies were aimed more at showing off the ability and scholarship of the doctors than at research. No one was expected to question the pronouncements of the literary authorities, Mundinus and Galen. The latter was held in such awe that to question him was considered to be tantamount to blasphemy. It had been believed up to the sixteenth century that Galen had dissected the human body. During the sixteenth century controversy raged because of the discrepancy between Galen's notes and what was actually visible. John Banister, a Surgeon and Physician working in London in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, published a *Historie of Man* in 1578, the *Proeme* of

which sets out to prove that what the ancients said they had seen was correct, but that mutations had since changed the human form, hence the 'sundry contradictions' of contemporary anatomists.<sup>32</sup> Such acute anxiety to prove Galen right resulted in ludicrous justifications such as that in Galen's time, for instance, when he noted his observation of it, the human femur was curved, but had since straightened out in response to the adoption of cylindrical nether garments!<sup>33</sup>

## 2. **Andreas Vesalius**

### 2.a. ***De Humani Corporis Fabrica***

In 1538 Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), a young but highly regarded Belgian anatomist working in Padua, issued a short guide to anatomy and physiology in six anatomical plates. In 1543 he published *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* which was to have great influence in the study of anatomy. Vesalius returned to Mundinus's practice of demonstrating the dissection himself, eliminating the practice of using an ostensor and steward.

The sight of a professor descending from his academic chair to dissect and demonstrate personally on the cadaver was something entirely novel. Students, physicians and men of learning crowded his classes.<sup>34</sup>

This meant that he was in close contact with the body and, unable to ignore what he could see for himself, he began to have serious doubts about some of Galen's observations. In the second edition of the *Fabrica* he committed himself in print. Concerning the *rete mirabile* he takes nearly a page to disprove what Galen says, but then shies away from his own conclusions, stating that it is almost non-existent in the human body, when his observations had proved what is truly the fact - that the *rete mirabile* does not exist in humans at all.<sup>35</sup> In fact his illustrations reveal more than he mentions in the text.

### 2.b. **Vesalius and the teaching of dissection at Padua**

Vesalius introduced a new theatrical flavour to the anatomy which lay people could attend, and both in his method and in his statements he revolutionised practical anatomy. The process was very slow, however, due to the ultra-conservative attitude of many of the university teachers. A statute of 1570 (repeated in 1648) was issued at Padua warning lecturers not to deviate from the orthodox texts of Galen and Mundinus.<sup>36</sup>

An eyewitness account of a series of lectures and related anatomies survives. It consists of a set of notes made by a student, Baldasar

Heseler, a German studying at Bologna, which accounts for, according to his preface, the whole of the course in Anatomy.<sup>37</sup> The notes appear to be a fair copy made by Heseler from notes made during the lectures and demonstrations to which he has added comments. The lectures were given at Bologna from 13-26 January, 1540, by Dr. Matthaeus Curtius, (c1475-1542/44) one of the most famous doctors and university lecturers in the first half of the sixteenth century. He lectured on anatomy at Pavia, Padua and Bologna. The dissections, which were intended to accompany and illustrate Curtius' lectures, were demonstrated separately by Vesalius. The course of dissections used three human subjects (all hanged felons) and six dogs, one of which was vivisected to show the working of the vocal chords.<sup>38</sup> The notes show a conservative Curtius, sticking rigidly to Galen and at times disagreeing with Mundinus because the latter departs from Galen for no more logical explanation than that Galen is right because he is Galen, and Mundinus wrong because he is *not* Galen. Curtius displays the reverential attitude held by most of the orthodox teachers of anatomy at the time: an attitude which saw Galen's writings as being a kind of 'holy writ' which it was sacreligious to question, and a view of anatomy which is in direct opposition to its use as an exploratory tool:

Galen demonstrates that the exposition of anatomy is sacred and divine, and that it must be approached in the same spirit and mind as divine service, above all since the explanation of anatomy bears witness to the power, goodness and wisdom of God.<sup>39</sup>

The notes paint an extraordinarily vivid picture of the two tutors, Curtius and Vesalius, as they struggle for dominance, each assured of their own rightness. Vesalius appears as an abrupt but brilliant man, with little patience for a colleague who refuses to see what is in front of his eyes, and little patience, for that matter, with the students he is supposed to be teaching. He repeatedly tells them that he will not show them certain things because they can see them for themselves: at the ninth demonstration

Curtius asked him [Vesalius] to show us also the small arteries in the concavity of the liver, but being proud he did not want to do so, because, he said, everybody can see them for himself.<sup>40</sup>

and although he is supposed to be illustrating Curtius' lectures, he is more interested in showing the far more technically difficult dissections of skin and muscle than the viscera. Curtius regards Vesalius with something like condescension - he treats him as a mere *anatomista* i.e. a demonstrator - and on the day of the twenty-fourth lecture and the twenty-second demonstration the two men reach such a pitch of irritation

with each other that a battle of words ensues which almost results in physical violence:

When the lecture of Curtius was finished, Vesalius, who had been present and heard the refutation of his arguments, asked Curtius to accompany him to the anatomy. For he wanted to show him that his theory was quite true. Therefore he brought Curtius to our two bodies ... Curtius answered smiling, for Vesalius, choleric as he was, was very excited ... Thus with much quarrel and scoffing they attacked each other, and in the meantime they accomplished nothing.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.c. Student enthusiasm for Vesalius' demonstrations

Despite the fact that the students complain that Vesalius skims over the things they should be learning, expecting them to know it all already (a perennial student complaint!), Vesalius' demonstrations seem to have been eagerly looked forward to. Heseler describes the Italian students as rushing from the lecture to the dissection, even on one occasion not waiting for Curtius to conclude his lesson:

In the middle of Curtius' lecture our beadle, by name of Pelegrinus, presented himself, and by order of the anatomists informed us that the anatomy on our subject was now prepared. And they asked us through the beadle, that after the lecture we should go to the anatomy in good order and without disturbance: for we should all be able well to see wonderful things which we had not seen before. Likewise, Dominus Curtius asked us to do so. And yet after the lecture we proceeded to the demonstration in great disorder, as the mad Italians do.<sup>42</sup>

For the students did not want to wait, they ran to the dissection from the lecture, as usual in disorder.<sup>43</sup>

... the Italians did not want to wait any longer. They ran like mad to the dissection.<sup>44</sup>

As at this moment ten o'clock sounded, the students, as usual, with a great rush ran to the anatomy.<sup>45</sup>

On this last occasion some students stayed to ask for the end of the lecture, but Curtius excused himself, saying he 'had a catarrh'. The students' preference for Vesalius' demonstrations over his lectures cannot have endeared the anatomist to the lecturer, and Curtius' narrow-mindedness and insistence on theory instead, even when demonstrated to be wrong, along with his general condescension towards Vesalius, indicates the gulf between theory and practice which existed at the time. While such tensions existed, real research into the human body was unlikely to make any headway.

Enthusiasm for Vesalius' dissections reached a peak in 1544 when he visited Pisa to take a course of anatomy for the newly established university. The large crowd was so eager to see the master at work that

they overloaded the temporary structure which had been built to house the dissection, and the scaffolding collapsed under the strain.<sup>46</sup>

### 3. **Anatomy in England**

By this time anatomical teaching had spread throughout Europe. Vesalius's new ideas reached Germany and France but took a long time to percolate through to England. There were medical faculties at the English Universities but these taught theory only or at most physicing, not surgery. The barber-surgeons, who had both itinerant and settled practices, took apprentices and employed journeymen and were regarded as workmen rather than as a profession. There was no organised guild to which they had to belong and they were sometimes combined with other unrelated skilled men to form a guild/company, as the company formed in Kendal, Westmorland, in 1578 shows: it combined surgeons, scriveners, barbers, glovers, skimmers, parchment and point makers.<sup>47</sup>

#### 3.a. **The Licencing of Physicians and Surgeons**

In 1435 the surgeons proper founded their own association of seventeen members which formed a specialised group within the body of surgeons (which included barbers). In 1511 Henry VIII passed a law forbidding any person

within the City of London, nor within seven myles of the same, shall take upon him to exercise and occupy as a Surgeon (except he be first examined, approved, and admitted by the Bishop of London, or by the Deane of Paules.<sup>48</sup>

The clerics were aided in their examinations by a board of four doctors or surgeons, and a similar law was passed in 1533 granting the same powers to the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>49</sup> This law was not very well enforced and holders of the licences were understandably not regarded with much trust or respect. Up to the Elizabethan period the clergy could be licenced to practice medicine and surgery but the element of union between Church and Medicine was not fully abolished until the Medical Act of 1858.<sup>50</sup> In fact, in 1859 at the murder trial of Dr. Thomas Smethurst one of the witnesses, when questioned as to his medical degree, revealed that it had been conferred by the Archbishop of Canterbury and was, as the court was informed, still valid.<sup>51</sup>

The 1511 Act caused a storm of public protest, and a petition was raised stating

the Company and Fellowship of Surgeons of London, minding only their own lucre and nothing the profit or ease of the diseased, have

sued, troubled and vexed divers honest persons, as well men as women, whom God hath endued with that knowledge of the nature, kind and operation of certain herbs, roots, and waters, and the using and ministering of them to such as be pained with customable diseases, etc. And yet the said persons have not taken any money for their pains or cunning, but have ministered the same to the poor people only, for neighbourhood and God's sake and charity. And it is now well known that the surgeons admitted will do no cure to any person but where they shall know to be rewarded with a greater sum or reward than the cure extendeth unto. For in case they would minister their cunning to sore people unrewarded they should not so many rot and perish to death for lack of surgery as daily do.<sup>52</sup>

This reflected the common people's attitude to the surgeons and physicians, which was to last for many years. The strength of public feeling eventually brought about a change in the law in 1540, which made it lawful for any

Kings Subject, having knowledge and experience of the nature of hearbes, rootes, and waters ... to practise, use, and minister, in, and to any outward sore uncome wound, appostemations, outward swelling, or disease, any herbe or herbes, ointments, bathes, pultesse, and implasters, according to their cunning, experience or knowledge ... without trouble, or penaltie.<sup>53</sup>

This practically reversed the 1511 Act and allowed both well-meaning but ignorant souls, and total charlatans to practice without hindrance. This was obviously detrimental to, on the one hand, the financial standing of the qualified physicians and surgeons, and on the other hand, to their reputation. The formation of the Company of Barbers and Barber-Surgeons and, in 1518, of the College of Physicians, enabled them to consolidate their position, and to formulate rules to ensure the standard of practice of the members.

### 3.b. **The United Company of Barber-Surgeons**

By 1537, in London the Company and Fellowship of Barbers and Barber-Surgeons had more members than any other city company.<sup>54</sup> With the encouragement of Henry VIII who wanted to improve the practice of both medicine and surgery in England, the College of Physicians was founded by Thomas Linacre (1460/61-1524) in 1518 and in 1540 a merger between the Company of Barbers and the Fraternity of Surgeons formed the United Company of Barber-Surgeons.

The prime mover in the latter amalgamation seems to have been Thomas Vicary, who became the first Master. The Charter, issued by Henry VIII includes:

the sayd maysters or governours of the mistery and comminaltie of barbouris and surgeons of London, and their successours yerely for

ever after their sad discrecions at their free liberte and pleasure shal and maie have and take without contradiction foure persons condempned adjudged and put to deathe for feloni by the due order of the kynges lawe of thys realme for anatomies without any further sute or labour to be made to the kyngs highnes his heyres or successours for the same. And to make incision of the same deade bodies or otherwyse to order the same after their said discrecions at their pleasures for their further and better knowlage instruction in sight learnyng and experience in the sayd scyence or facultie of surgery.<sup>56</sup>

This authorised dissection in England for the first time and gave the Company the right to the bodies of four criminals per annum (Scotland had already obtained permission for bodies for dissection in 1506<sup>56</sup>). Before the year was out Vicary had asked for the body of a criminal hanged at Tyburn.

A painting by Holbein commemorating the charter shows Henry VIII surrounded by the prominent members of the fraternity, one of whom is Dr. (later Sir) William Butts, who appears briefly in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* Act V scene ii in his character of king's physician.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.c. **Anatomy at the Barber-Surgeons' Hall**

A Reader in Anatomy (Vicary was probably the first) was appointed and in 1546 Dr. John Caius (1510-1573) took the post and held it for the next seventeen years. Caius was the President of the College of Physicians from 1555-64 and again in 1571, but he began attending anatomies at the Barber-Surgeons Hall on his return from Italy c1544-5. He performed anatomies there for almost 20 years at the wish of the king and before the *surgeons* rather than the *physicians* because, as he states in his autobiography 'among the physicians at that time there was no dissection'.<sup>58</sup>

This was not only because the physicians were not granted access to bodies until 1565, but also because there seems to have been a lack of interest generally in anatomy on the part of the physicians. There was, indeed, some ill feeling between the two professions; surgeons were not supposed to administer any internal medicine, but often did so. The erosion of the boundaries of the physicians' practice was regarded by them with some animosity. Anatomy in England was still very much an aid to memory rather than an investigative tool. At first the semi-literate surgeons who had actually seen inside the human body, very often on the battlefield where most of them obtained their experience, were considered





61. Vesalius, *Fabrica*, Historiated initials

a. Vivisection of a pig. The trachea is being opened. In the text Vesalius explains that the pig can be kept alive by using a pair of bellow inserted in the trachea, even when the thorax is opened. In the bottom left-hand corner a cupid is playing with a razor.

b. Boiling a skull



c. Hanging up a dog for the purpose of dissection.

d. A 'resurrection party'

beneath contempt and the physicians, who were better educated and were usually the writers of medical books, showed little interest in the subject. Even with the flood of good quality text books from the continent, there were many who rejected the new European ideas and stuck rigidly to Galen. At a much later date, even William Harvey, with his revolutionary discovery of the circulation of the blood, went back to Aristotle and Galen on purely anatomical matters.<sup>59</sup>

The reluctance to abandon Galen in favour of the new ideas from the continent can be seen in a disciplinary action against Joannes Geynes by Dr. Caius as the Reader in Anatomy at the Barber-Surgeons Hall in London. In 1559 Geynes had to state 'I Joannes Geynes confess that Galen did not err in those things for which I criticized him'<sup>60</sup>, and this despite the fact that Caius had actually studied in Padua and been acquainted with Vesalius. This reactionary attitude proved detrimental to any advance in anatomical knowledge.

### 3.d. **The supply of bodies for anatomies**

For over twenty years the Barber-Surgeons had sole rights to the bodies of felons for anatomy purposes in England. It was not until 1565 that Elizabeth granted four bodies annually to the Royal College of Physicians, and in the same year, Gonville College, Cambridge obtained a grant of two bodies annually. Oxford did not receive permission to remove bodies until 1636 when Charles I allowed the Reader of Anatomy to demand the body of anyone executed within 21 miles of Oxford. Until the passing of the Anatomy Act in 1832, hanged criminals were the only legitimate source of bodies for dissection in England. This supply was to prove inadequate and by the early nineteenth century a lucrative trade in illegally procured bodies had developed. Such 'body-snatching', however, was not new; there is evidence that, at least on the continent, prosecutions for illicit seizure of bodies can be traced back as far as Mundinus,<sup>61</sup> and Vesalius provides an illustration of a 'resurrection party' in one of the series of historiated, or illuminated, initials in his *Fabrica* [Illustration 61] which each depict an anatomical scene performed by putti.

### 3.e. **Anatomy at the College of Physicians**

In 1582 Lord Lumley established in perpetuity at the College of Physicians a lectureship in surgery. The Reader had to perform an anatomy

At the end of the yeare in winter, to dissect *openlie* in the reading place all the bodie of man especiallie the inward parts for five

daies together, as well before as after dinner; if the bodies may so last without annoie.<sup>62</sup> (my italics)

'Openlie' is a somewhat ambiguous term: it could mean 'open to all members', 'open to the public' or 'opening the body itself'.

### 3.f. Regulations concerning anatomies

Members of both the Barber-Surgeons and the College of Physicians were expected to attend their respective anatomies which constituted public functions and involved a considerable amount of feasting. Fellows were also expected to conduct a public anatomy in a year to be decided by the President, and could be fined for non-attendance. Despite these fines, attendance was sometimes difficult to assure, although there is also evidence to show that in some cases the anatomy was so popular as to warrant strong controlling measures. Regulations laid down 'At a Committee appointed to prepare conveniences for the lectures' on 12 July, 1753 included instructions

To make a door opposite the passage to the Theatre for the mob, and part off the passage to prevent them coming to the steps.

To have proper hatches or bars to separate ye members of ye Co: in ye Hall from the Court of Assistants and prevent them getting into ye Theatre till ye court are seated.

To fix iron spikes in the Theatre to prevent the Mob getting over the outer rail.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.g. Private anatomies

In addition to these public functions there were private anatomies, but attendance at these was not compulsory. Rules laid down by the Company of Barber-Surgeons included one concerning Private Anatomies. It forbade:

Private Anathomies and other Anathomies by any time hereafter in any place or places, but onely within the common Hall of the said Mysterye. And further that uppon speciall Lycens graunted by the Master and examiners for the tyme beinge any person or persons of the fellowshipe exercising Surgery lawfully may ... Take forth and bring home into the said Hall the Ded bodyes for Anathomies, and then and there to make and worke the same for their knowledge and more connyng. And that all private Anathomies shall reverently henceforth be buryed as publick Anathomies for the worshippe of the said mysterye. An skelliton to be made onelye excepted upon payne of forfeiture of ten poundes.<sup>64</sup>

This restriction on private research was strictly enforced, as can be seen in an entry in the records in which

John Deane was appointed to bring in his fine of X<sup>14</sup>, in that he had an Anathomy in his house.<sup>65</sup>

Even when Private Anatomies were authorised, they were strictly circumscribed. In 1577 a surgeon, who was also a physician,

Mr. Thomas Hall of this companie is graunted to Desect Thanatomies private or publick for the terme of Tenne yeres that shall happen to be within this howse, and that there shall be yerellie forewer one private Anathomye at the leaste and one publick, yf some cause reasonable be not to the contrarie. The same pryvate alwaies to be Desected before the publicke. And the same to be allwaies fetched from the place of execucion by the Master and Stewards for the tyme being. And that as well the same Stewardes as Masters shalbe attendant upon the Desector During the tyme of any Desection.<sup>66</sup>

This attitude, forbidding private exploratory research resulted in a retardation of progress in England which can be seen reflected in the books published on the subject in England in the sixteenth century.

#### 4. Anatomical text books in England

Little work of much note was published by English anatomists before and during the sixteenth century. The Barber-Surgeons already exercised censorship on books of surgery written by its members. An entry in the Annals for 1588 states

yf any man of this misterie shall at anye tyme hereafter make any Booke or Bookes of Surgerie the same shall not be published unless the same booke or bookes be firste presented unto the masters governours and examinours of this Companie for the tyme beinge upon payne of X<sup>11</sup>.<sup>67</sup>

The extreme conservatism and lack of any driving spirit of enquiry meant that England lagged behind in the revolutionary attitude to anatomy, continuing to use medieval texts based on Galen and Mundinus, and the flood of excellent books published in the universal scientific language of Latin on the continent did little to encourage publications in English. Between 1500-1600 only nine anatomical texts were published in English, of which only four were by English authors.<sup>68</sup>

David Edwardes's *De Indiciis et Praecognitionibus; ejusdem in Anatomien introductio* (1532) was the first anatomy text to be written by an English author, although he shuns the vernacular in favour of Latin. It gives the first reference to a dissection taking place in England:

In the body of that one whom we dissected very recently the left branch had a higher place of origin. Very often, however, the opposite occurs, so that the right emulgent vein is carried higher in the body<sup>69</sup>

This shows the anatomist observing and noting a change from the usual given description (derived from Galen's anatomical studies of animals) but he is still not prepared to state that his literary source is wrong. The book is based mainly on Mundinus and follows his order of dissection although it makes no mention of the extremities. It is arranged in the

form of a formal visceral lecture rather than a text, and may, in fact, follow the order of a similar lecture at the Royal College of Physicians. What is certain is that Edwardes was himself involved in conducting private dissections at the time. It was published in London but seems to have had virtually no influence.

The *Fabrica* (1543) itself had appeared at a time when English surgeons were beginning to realise the importance of anatomy, but the very brilliance of Vesalius' book seems to have discouraged British anatomists from publishing their own text books. Such books as do appear tend to be either a rehashing of old texts or to be concerned with anatomy only in a peripheral sense.

#### 4.a. **Anatomy books published in English 1540-1600**

The first text published in English was a translation of Hieronymus Brunschwig's under the title *The noble experyence of the vertuous handyworke of surgeri* (1525). The section on anatomy is 13 pages long with 4 woodcuts including a zodiac man, an illustration relating the parts of the body to the signs of the zodiac, and seems to be more concerned with surgery than anatomy. It was printed in London by Petrius Treveris.

A popular book - a translation by Richard Jonas of Eucharius Rösslin's *Der Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Rozzgarlen* - appeared in 1540 under the title of *The byrth of mankynde*. It was mainly directed at midwives and was printed in London, going through 17 editions before its last in 1654.

Thomas Vicary's *A Profitable treatise of the anatomie of mans body* (1548) was the first anatomical book to be written in English. It was based on a copy of a text by Henri de Mondeville compiled by an English surgeon in 1392 and therefore had nothing new or original to add to existing knowledge. It did, however, prove to be extremely popular, being republished ten times up to 1651. No copy of the first edition of 1548 survives, although there are copies of further editions beginning in 1577.

In 1553 Thomas Geminus produced a plagiarized version of Vesalius in English, and in 1559 had it translated again by Nicholas Udall, and in 1565 a translation by John Halle of Guido Lanfranc of Milan (d. 1315) *Anatomy or Dissection of the Body of Man* appeared containing a brief account of anatomy and a rather trenchant criticism of the quacks.

A translation of a book by Pierre Boaistuau (d. 1566) *Histoires prodigieuses* (1560) by E. Fenton was printed in London in 1569 under the title *Certaine secreete wonders of nature, containing a description of sundry strange things, seeming monstrous in our eyes and judgement, bicause we are not privie to the reasons of them. Gathered out of divers learned authors as well Greeke as Latine, sacred as prophane*. This was hardly anatomical in the true sense. It contains descriptions of monsters and marvels.

In 1578 John Banister (1533-1610) published *The Historie of Man, sucked from the Sappe of the most approved Anathomistes in this present age* which was drawn from the works of continental authors and introduced the work of Realdo Colombo (1516-1559) on the pulmonary circulation. The book was a compilation of other peoples' work despite the fact that Banister was in a position, as Reader in Anatomy for the United Company of Barber-surgeons, to do independent research.<sup>70</sup> There is a contemporary portrait of John Banister delivering the visceral lecture at the Barber-Surgeons' Hall in 1581 using an octavo copy of Colombo's posthumously published *De Re Anatomica*, printed in 1572 in Paris. He probably also used the English translation of Vesalius by Geminus as the only good anatomy manual in the vernacular. The portrait is by an unknown artist on two pieces of paper joined down the middle and is laid in an album of anatomical drawings done for Banister formerly owned by William Hunter and now in Glasgow University Library.<sup>71</sup>

The last sixteenth century English anatomical publication was Nicholas Gyer's *The English phlebotomy: or method & way of healing by letting of blood* which appeared in 1592.

#### 4.b. Anatomical broad-sheets

In addition to the anatomical books there were broad-sheets (fugitive sheets) printed which were mainly illustrative of pre-Vesalian ideas (although printed up to and well after *Fabrica* appeared). They usually show the whole body and sometimes have flaps which open to reveal the viscera, etc. They seem to have served partly for popular instruction and partly to refresh the memory of bath keepers and barbers, being hung up outside their establishments.<sup>72</sup> These broad-sheets seem mostly to have been printed on the continent but examples can be found in England. Vesalius himself published such loose prints - his first six plates of 1538

- but these were intended for serious study rather than to satisfy popular curiosity.

## 5. **Anatomy theatres**

With the rise in interest in dissection, suitable places had to be found in which to hold the anatomies. The earliest known description of an anatomy theatre is by Alessandro Benedetti (b. 1460-d. Venice 1525) in 1493 in the Latin *Historia corporis humani*:

Furthermore a properly adapted theater should be located in a spacious and well-ventilated place, with ranks of seats like those of an amphitheater, as at Rome and at Verona; and it should be large enough to accommodate all the spectators comfortably, that the barber-surgeons who do the dissecting may not be jostled by the crowd. Only those who have great skill must continue to dissect. The seating arrangement is to be according to rank... The cadaver should be placed at the center of the theater on a fairly high bench in a well-lighted place convenient for the dissectors. The time of reconvening should be announced at the end of each session, that the work may be entirely completed before decomposition sets in.<sup>73</sup>

### 5.a. **Padua**

By the second half of the sixteenth century it was becoming evident that more permanent buildings were needed to house the increasingly important and lavish anatomies. The first permanent anatomy theatre was built in Padua in 1594 by Hieronymus Fabricius (Fabrizio ab Aquapendente, c1533-1619), who taught at Padua between 1565 and 1604<sup>74</sup> and who built a structure within a room in the University building.<sup>75</sup> [Illustrations 31, 32] He was not only a lecturer in anatomy and a great scholar, but also a person of considerable influence; his name was inscribed in the golden book of Venetian nobility.<sup>76</sup> The structure which bears his name held 200-300 in six steeply rising concentric galleries with no seating or windows. The lighting was provided by two chandeliers with four candles in each and by eight further candles held by students. It was actually very small, the length of the room in which it was constructed being only 10 meters (33 feet), and the most distant spectator was no more than 30 feet from the body.<sup>77</sup>

This was followed in 1597 by the theatre of Leyden, again built in an existing building and of the same basic shape, but wider, flatter and lighter.<sup>78</sup>

**5.b. London**

In England both the Barber-Surgeons and the College of Physicians initially used their halls for anatomies. In the Annals for 1 February, 1568 an order appears

that there shal be buyldynge don and made about the Hall for seates for the Company that cometh unto every publyque anothomy, ffor by cause that every person comynge to see the same maye have good prospect over the same; and that one sholde not cover the syghte thereof one from another, as heretofore the Company hath much complayned on the same.<sup>79</sup>

There seems to have been an anatomy theatre at the College's second building at Amen Corner, because there is evidence of its redecoration in 1641,<sup>80</sup> but no other details survive and it was not mentioned in the Parliamentary Survey during the Commonwealth. Its Cutlerian Theatre, known as the 'Pill Box' because of its lantern, was not opened until 1674. An octagonal, domed building 40 feet wide, with six circular seats, it saw service for 150 years.<sup>81</sup>

**5.c. Inigo Jones' anatomy theatre**

The Barber-Surgeons became the first possessors of a *purpose built* anatomy theatre; until then they had been using the Guild's Hall in Monkwell Street. There is a plan of the building at Worcester College, Oxford and a short description of it in Hatton's *New View of London* 1708. It was designed by Inigo Jones and was opened in 1636 at a cost of nearly £1,000. It was elliptical in shape, being the only anatomy theatre to follow Padua in the adoption of this plan, 40 feet by 30 feet with staircases giving access outside in two square turrets on either side of the entrance façade. Access was also possible across a bridge to the main entrance. This indicates social division: there was no way of access between the lower tiers and the dissecting table. There were four rows of seats and an open sector opposite the door for ceremonial entrances.<sup>82</sup>

On the continent anatomy theatres continued to be constructed up to the end of the eighteenth century, one of the last being that of Pavia (twenty miles south of Milan), which was built by Scarpa, the professor of anatomy at the University, in 1783. It followed the Parisian Royal Academy of Surgery building designed by Gondoin in 1769 in its semi-circular shape and although now only used for university functions, remains intact as it was built.<sup>83</sup>



## Appendix B

Bernard Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock*, (New York 1962), pp.266-268. A re-writing of the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice* by Richard H. Horne, *Shylock, A Critical Fancy* (1838) publicly presented May 16, 1850 at Sadler's Wells, and purporting to 'show what might have passed through Shylock's mind on listening to certain portions of Portia's line of defence, supposing the same trial ... had occurred in the present century.' The scene follows Shakespeare's through to Portia's admonition not to shed one drop of blood (IV i 309). From there Horne rewrites the scene:

SHY: Peace, false Judge!  
There's no such thing as flesh devoid of blood!  
Flesh is made up of vessels, and they're filled  
With blood alone, - nay, blood is liquid flesh.  
Oh, thou false Judge! Most treacherous, wicked Judge!  
Send to your butcher for your daily meat -  
What will you say if he do sell a pound  
Of skin and empty veins? Till you can show me  
Flesh that is bloodless, be't what kind it may,  
My claim is good; one flesh alone exists,  
And that hath blood, for each includes the other.  
Doth all your wisdom in a quibble end  
Like bubbles blown by Law?

(The Duke and the Magnificoes look confounded. Portia stands troubled and perplexed.)

POR: Yet - fear the Law!  
SHY: This bond holds blood! - out on your cullender wits!  
If Laws be folly, all are fooled by them.  
I am your fool in suffering these delays.  
But *he* is mine, by wisdom and by law.  
A Jew may be the dog  
That's hated by a Christian's charity,  
But not the dupe of *words*!  
BAS: O Jew, forbear!  
SHY: Forbear! - I came here to be paid a debt.  
BAS: Lash not thyself to fury, like a beast!  
SHY: 'Tis ye who have lashed me thus: I'll have my bond!  
Trifle no more - there is no power in Venice  
To alter a decree established;  
Said not the Doctor so? - then was he wise,  
But afterwards he spake as doth a fool;  
Nay, worse; he damned his soul with lies, to save  
That Christian beast who spat upon my beard.

(The Court is thrown into utter perplexity, and remain silent.)

POR:           *(After a troubled pause)* The Jew shall have all  
justice;  
Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh;

Yet, Shylock, see thou cut not less nor more  
 But just a pound of flesh; if thou tak'st more  
 Or less, than just a pound, be it so much  
 As makes it light or heavy in the substance  
 Or the division of the twentieth part  
 Of one poor scruple; - nay, if the scale do turn  
 But in the estimation of a hair,  
 Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.

SHY: (*With deadly bitterness*) I'll not take more; I'll take  
 it *by degrees*,

Therefore not more, - since thou'd'st be so exact;  
 Be not thou hasty, treacherous young Judge;  
 I am not bound to take it all, at once.

BAS: O villainous Jew! thou'd'st torture him to death!

SHY: (*Calmly*) If in some days after the half be paid,  
 He chance to die - that is no fault of mine;  
 My bond doth say a pound; but doth not say  
 That I must take the whole immediately.  
 We're not compell'd to ruin thus our debtors.  
 I'll take it *by instalments* - would you jeer me?  
 Old Shylock hath his jest!

POR: But since the whole  
 Is offered and not taken, thou canst have  
 No claim hereafter.

SHY: I do claim all, now.

POR: Take then the pound of flesh and blood, fierce Jew!  
 But see you spill not aught that is *not yours*.

SHY: Why must I have this care - look ye to that;  
 It is the very nature of all flesh  
 When cut to bleed; and here my bond declares  
 That - from the Christian breast of one who scoffs  
 At me, my tribe, and ever used to mock  
 My prosperous dealings, I shall forthwith cut  
 A pound in forfeit! No more words, - prepare!

POR: His wasted blood shall yet bring ruin on thee.

SHY: Let ruin come! - so I can once behold  
 That streaming breast, I care not if his blood  
 Swell to a second Galilean Sea,  
 And with its humming and abhorrent surge  
 Sweep away Venice! Now! now! stand aside!

DUK: (*Rising*) Restrain him! - sure some devil speaks in  
 him!

(*All rise*)

Keep back the bearded vulture!

POR: (*As by a sudden thought*) The ruin thou defiest shall  
 fall upon thee!

Thy vengeance by thy sentence, e'en by the bond  
 Which thou so fiercely urgest! By its terms,  
 Purport and stratagem, thou seek'st the life  
 Of a Venetian citizen; for which *crime*  
 The Law unwinds itself from that man's neck  
 And with a terrible and just recoil  
 Springs back on thee! Shylock! one half thy goods  
 Are forfeit to Antonio! ...

### Appendix C

Bernard Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock*, (New York, 1962), pp.268-269.  
*The Albany Law Journal* (1872) - the author was supposedly Esek Cowen of Troy, N.Y. A "Report" of the decision by the Supreme Court of New York, on appeal, of the case of Shylock vs. Antonio

I quote Grebanier's précis:

Antonio is described as mentally unsound because (this will appear to lawyers as good reasoning) he loaned money to friends without interest. In the appeal for the case, it is asserted by the counsel for the appellant that the referee, agreed to by all parties, was in point of fact a woman! Though she called herself Balthazar, her maiden name had actually been Mary Jane Portia, an oil heiress, and she was now married to Antonio's friend, Bassanio. The judgment pronounced by this referee was:

1. That the bond was valid; the plaintiff was entitled to a pound of flesh.
2. That he was entitled only to an exact pound, neither more nor less; if he took more or less or a drop of blood, he would be found guilty of murder.
3. That under a law dating back to the time of Peter Stuyvesant, the plaintiff was liable to the punishment of death "for practising against the life of a Christian."
4. That he could evade capital punishment only by giving half his fortune to his daughter and becoming a Christian. The plaintiff had no counsel, and was forthwith baptized. Upon first appeal, the judgment was confirmed.

The Supreme Court's decision follows:

1. The judgment pronounced upon Shylock was a truly feminine one - a decree half-civil, half-criminal, with the punishment half-commuted; it has no resemblance to any law or equity known to civilization.
2. The bond itself should have been voided since it provided for the commission of a capital crime.
3. It was further voided by the offer to Shylock in court of the amount of the loan.
4. No one can cut an exact pound of flesh, nor is it possible to cut flesh without drawing blood.
5. Hence, if the bond was allowed, the stricture about weight and blood was absurd.

It is therefore the unanimous opinion of this court that Mrs. Bassanio's decree must be reversed.

## NOTES

In all quotations throughout this thesis I have modernised the long s and the use of u and v, and expanded scriptal ellisions.

All quotations from Shakespeare's plays and poems are from *The Complete Works*, edited by Peter Alexander (London and Glasgow, 1951)

Biblical quotations throughout the thesis are from the Geneva Bible, 1576 edition.

## Abbreviations

<i>E&amp;S</i>	<i>Essays and Studies</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Essays in Criticism</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>A Journal of English Literary History</i>
<i>ES</i>	<i>English Studies</i>
<i>JEGP</i>	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>The Modern Language Review</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>Philology Quarterly</i>
<i>REL</i>	<i>Review of English Literature</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>The Review of English Studies</i>
<i>RORD</i>	<i>Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama</i>
<i>Sh. Studs.</i>	<i>Shakespeare Studies</i>
<i>SQ</i>	<i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Shakespeare Survey</i>

## Abstract

1. Nigel Alexander, *SS* 26 (1973), reviewing Dieter Mehl's article 'Visual and Rhetorical Imagery in Shakespeare's Plays', p.176
2. e.g. John Doeblér, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures* (Albuquerque, 1974) Chapter 2, Honor Matthews, *Characters and Symbolism in Shakespeare's Plays* (Cambridge, 1962) and Nevill Coghill, 'The Basis of Shakespearean Comedy' *E&S* (1950) pp.1-28
3. Notably Sigmund Freud, 'The Theme of the Three Caskets' in *Collected Papers* (1913), Volume IV

## Chapter 1 - Emblems

1. Life-threatening situations in the other early comedies are present, but not so obvious; Valentine is banished from Milan on pain of death by the Duke:

Be gone; I will not hear thy vain excuse,  
But, as thou lov'st life, make speed from hence.

(*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* III i 168-169)

and the young men of Navarre swear to abide by their oaths or

... his own hand may strike his honour down  
That violates the smallest branch herein.

(*Love's Labour's Lost* I i 20-21)

and the decrees (which are almost instantly broken) have heavy penalties:

Berowne: 'Item, That no woman shall come within a mile of my court'  
... Let's see the penalty. '- on pain of losing her tongue'

...

'Item, If any man be seen to talk with a woman within the  
term of three years, he shall endure such public shame as the  
rest of the court can possibly devise.'

(I i 119-120, 122-123, 128-130)

*The Taming of the Shrew* has little in the way of life-threats, although Sly is in danger of the stocks at the very beginning of the play, but Katherina's violence provides a seasoning of threat.

Even in the tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet* has elements of a comedy in much of its earlier part, despite the street violence, which expresses itself in rapid-fire banter and witty exchange. The play only turns truly tragic with the death of Mercutio, even then having patches of comic dialogue, particularly concerning the nurse. The violence of the street fights establishes a threat of danger in *Romeo and Juliet* from the beginning, but the tension does not increase - it is present from the beginning and remains to the end at much the same level.

2. I took a friend to the 1987 Stratford production of *The Merchant of Venice* who had not read or seen the play, and had no idea of its story. I asked her in the interval how she thought it would turn out, and she was convinced that Shylock would achieve his pound of flesh and get away with it.
3. John Doeblér, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures: Studies in Iconic Imagery* (Albuquerque, 1974), pp.xii-xiii

4. Works on the relationship between Literature and emblems include:  
 David Bevington, *Action is Eloquence; Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1984),  
 Peter M. Daly, 'The Poetic Emblem' *Neophilologus* 54, (1970), pp.381-97  
 Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London, 1948),  
 Henry Green, *Andrea Alciati and His Books of Emblems* (London and Manchester, 1872),  
 Henry Green, *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers; an exposition of their similarities of thought and expression* (London, 1870),  
 Henry Green *Whitney's Choice of Emblems* (London, 1866),  
 Dieter Mehl, 'Visual and Rhetorical Imagery in Shakespeare's Plays' *E&S*, (1972), pp.83-100  
 S. Schuman, 'Emblems and the English Renaissance Drama; A Checklist' *RORD* (1960),  
 Henri Stegemeier, 'Problems in Emblem Literature' *JEGP* 45 (1946), pp.26-37  
 Margaret F. Thorp 'Shakespeare and the Fine Arts' *PMLA* 46 (1931), pp.672-93  
 Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300-1660*, Volume 2 1576-1660, Part 1, Book 2, 'Emblems and Images', (London, 1963),
5. Quoted in Green, *Whitney* (London, 1866) p.x
6. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes and other Devises - For the most part gathered out of sundrie writers, Englished and moralized, And divers newly devised* (Leyden, 1586), Address to the Reader, sig.¶¶4<sup>r</sup>
7. Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, translated by Edwin H. Zeydel (New York, 1944), p.39
8. Ibid, pp.28-30
9. Freeman, p.42
10. Green, *Shakespeare*, p.71
11. Daly, 'The Poetic Emblem', p.394, his italics
12. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), edited John M. Robertson (London 1905), p.121
13. Henry Green, *A. Alciati Emblematum Flumen abundans, or Alciati's Emblems in their Full Stream* (Manchester, 1871), p.6, quoting Ronville's Latin test of the 1550 Lyons edition.
14. Ibid, p.6
15. Ibid, pp.6-7
16. Alexander Barclay, *The ship of Fooles, wherein is shewed the folly of all States, with divers other workes adioyned unto the same, very profitable and fruitfull for all men. Translated out of Latin into Englishe by Alexander Barclay, Priest*, (1570). The text used is the second edition of 1570, the first edition having been printed in about 1509. The quote is taken from Barclay's translation of *The Prologue of James Locher* (sig.¶6<sup>r</sup>) to which Barclay appends some of his own ideas. James Locher translated Brant into Latin, and it is probably from this text that Barclay makes his own translation. In fact the work is more of a free adaptation, and Barclay adds his own Lenvoys at the end of each emblem.

17. Sheila Williams, 'Two Seventeenth Century Semi-Dramatic Allegories of Truth the Daughter of Time' *The Guildhall Miscellany* (October 1963), Vol. II, pp.207-220, p.220
18. Alice S. Venezky, *Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage* (New York, 1950), p.20.
19. Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, edited by Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester, 1973), p.107. The *Apology* was originally published 1595, but was probably written 1580-83.
20. Samuel Daniel, *The Worthy tract of Paulus Iovius, contayning a Discourse of rare inventions, both Militarie and Amorous called Imprese, Whereunto is added a Preface contayning the Arte of composing them, with many other notable devises.*, (London, 1585), sig.A1<sup>v</sup>
21. Doebler, preface xi. It is worth noting that Shakespeare's own nickname - the Swan of Avon - is a direct reference to the emblem devised for the poets. Alciati's emblem 197 (1551 ed), 184 (1621 ed) entitles *Insignia Poetarum* shows the arms of the poets in a woodcut of a shield with a swan on it hanging on a tree by a ribbon, with swans on rush banked water in the background. Whitney adopts the same idea in emblem 126, the verse of which reads:  

The Martiall Captaines ofte, do marche into the fielde,  
 With Eagles, or with Griphins fierce, or Dragons, in their shield,  
 But Phoebus sacred birde, let Poëttes moste comende  
 Who, as it were by skill devine, with songe forshowes his ende,  
 And as his tune delightes; for rarenes of the same,  
 So they with sweetenes of their verse, shoulde winne a lasting name,  
 And as his colour white; Sincerenes doth declare,  
 So Poëttes must bee cleane, and pure, and must of crime beware,  
 For which respectes the Swanne, should in their Ensigne stande,  
 No forren fowle, and once suppos'de kinge of LIGURIA Lande.
22. Bevington, p.9
23. Ibid, p.9
24. Shakespeare also makes it clear that he expects decorum in the manner of acting, putting this advice into the mouth of Hamlet:

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you, trippingly on the tongue ... Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently ... O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise ... Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature ... Now, this overdone or come tardy off, though it makes the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve.

*Hamlet* III ii lff)

Other playwrights were equally against extravagant or unnecessary gesture. Nashe instructs his players in his prologue to *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592)

this I bar, that none of you stroke your beards to make action, play with your codpiece points, or stand fumbling on your buttons when you know not how to bestow your fingers. Serve God and act clearly.

and Richard Edward's court play *Damon and Pithias* of 1565 states in its prologue

In comedies, the greatest skill is this; rightly to touch  
 All things to the quick, and eke to frame each person so  
 That by his common talk you may his nature rightly know ...  
 So correspondent to their kind their speeches ought to be  
 Which speeches well pronounced, with action lively framed,  
 If this offend the lookerson, let Horace then be blamed,  
 Which hath our author taught at school from whom he doth not swerve,  
 In such kind of exercise decorum to observe,

26. Whitney, *Auxilio divino*, p.203
27. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna or a Garden of Heroical Devises, furnished, and adorned with Emblemes and Impresas of sundry natures, Newly devised, moralized, and published*, (London, 1612), *His graviora*, p.165
28. P.S., *The Heroical Devises of M. Claudius Paradin. Translated out of Latin and into English by P.S.*, (London, 1591), p.131
29. Thomas Combe, *The Theater of Fine Devices* Facsimile of edition printed in London, 1614 (Huntington Library, 1983), no.78
30. P.S., *Nodos Virtute resolvo*, p.272
31. Whitney, *Furor and rabies*, p.45
32. Huston Diehl, *An Index of Icons in English Emblem Books 1500-1700*, (Norman and London, 1986)
33. Henry Godyere (H.G.), *The Mirrour of Maiestie; or The Badges of Honour conceitedly emblazoned with Emblemes Annexed, Poetically Unfolded*, (London, 1619), no.26, p.51
34. Peacham, *Haud conveniunt*, p.169
35. Whitney, pp.146, 148
36. Combe, no.100; Whitney, pp.175, 159; Andrew Willet, *Sacrorum emblematum centuria una*, (Cambridge, 1572), no.97
37. Whitney, p.52, 150, 195; Willet, no.89; George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635) p.183, Book 3 Emblem XLIX, Wither's *Collection of Emblemes* although not published until 1635, contains, on the author's own admission, old and familiar emblems as well as a few new ones.
38. Peacham, *Cui candor morte redemptus*, p.75
39. Whitney, *Quod in te est, prome*, p.87
40. Wither, *Pro lege et pro grege*, 'Our Pelican, by bleeding, thus,/ Fulfill'd the Law, and cured Us', p.154, Book 3 Emblem XI
41. Whitney, *Frays meretur fraudem*, p.210
42. Ibid, *Nec sibi, nec alteri*, p.184
43. Ibid, *Inanis impetus*, p.213
44. Ibid, *Alius peccat, alius plectitur*, p.56
45. Otho Vaenius (Otto Van Veen), *Anorum Emblemata, Figuris aeneis incisa studio othonis vaeni; Emblems of Love with verses in Latin, English and Italian* (Antwerp, 1608), p.75; Philip Ayres, *Emblemata Amatoria; or Cupids Address to the Ladies* (London, 1683), no.14
46. Edmund Arwaker, *Pia Desideria; or, Divine addresses* (London, 1686), book 3, p.4



47. Francis Thynne, "Emblemes and Epigrammes" (MS, c1600), no.18, quoted in Diehl, p.122
48. Georgette de Montenay, *A Booke of armes, or remembrances, wherein ar one hundered Godly emblemata, in peecees of brasse very fine graven, and adorned pleasant to be seen, First by the Noble, and industrious minde Georgetta de Montenay, invented and only in the French tongue elaborated; Bot now, in severall Languages* (Frankfurt, 1619)
49. Ibid, *Noli altum sapere*, p.394
50. Whitney, *Amicitia, etiam post mortem durans*, p.62
51. Peacham, *Ope mutua*, p.39
52. Whitney, *Invidiae descriptio*, p.94
53. Peacham, *Levitas*, p.149
54. Willet, *Silentii commendatio*, no.31
55. Peacham, *Nec metuas nec optes*, p.8
56. Whitney, *Sic discerne*, p.68
57. P.S., *Restat ex victore Orientis*, p.61
58. Whitney, *Mortui divitiae*, p.86
59. Wither, *Restat de victore orientis*, 'Loe, heere is all, that hee possest,/ Which once was Victor of the East', p.216, Book 4 Emblem VIII
60. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man in Four Epistles*, Epistle II, 1,2, in *Pope, Poetical Works*, edited by Herbert Davis, (Oxford and New York, 1966) p.250
61. M. C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* (London, 1951), p.175
62. Green, *Shakespeare*, p.108
63. I i 22-40
64. Green, *Whitney*, pp.243ff
65. Whitney, p.11.
66. Francis Petrarch, *Physicke Against Fortune*, Translated by Thomas Twyne (London, 1579). This was the only one of Petrarch's philosophical works to be translated during the Renaissance, and proved to be very popular; by the end of the sixteenth century translations existed in Italian, French, Spanish, German and Czech as well as the English translation by Twyne. The book takes the form of a series of dialogues, the first half between Joy and Reason and the second between Sorrow and Reason. Reason argues against blind acceptance of fortune, particularly good fortune, which is seen as being more insidiously dangerous to the soul than adverse fortune, and in many cases Petrarch uses the image of the soul as a ship afloat on the sea of life as an illustration of his argument.
67. Ibid, Book 1, Dialogue 87, pp.109<sup>v</sup>, 110<sup>r</sup>
68. Brant, no.109, pp.355-356
69. Barclay, stanzas 4, 8, 10, pp.224<sup>r</sup>, 224<sup>v</sup>, 225<sup>r</sup>, sig.Pp2<sup>r</sup>, Pp2<sup>v</sup>, Pp3<sup>r</sup>
70. Whitney, p.137
71. Peter M. Daly, *Andreas Alciatus*, (Toronto, 1985). The book provides the first English translation of Alciati, together with comparative translations of French (1536, 1574), German (1542, 1567), Italian (1551, 1626) and Spanish (1549) editions. Emblem numbers given in this thesis are for the 1551 edition of Alciati. no.50

72. Ibid, Marquale's Italian translation, published in Lyon, 1551, no.39 (Alciati emblem 43)
73. The Christian requirement for unquestioning faith is exemplified in the story related in Matthew, 8, 23-26:

And when he was entred into the ship, his disciples followed him, And, beholde, there arose a great tempest in the sea, so that the ship was covered with waves; but he was a sleepe. Then his disciples came, and awoke him; saying, Master, save us; we perish. And he said unto them, Why are ye feareful, O ye of litle faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the windes and the sea; and so there was a great calme.

The relationship between *The Merchant of Venice* and this passage of scripture is strengthened when taken together with the following two chapters, for within three chapters, various key elements in the play are mentioned: ship, storm, danger; possession by devils (Shylock is frequently referred to as a devil throughout the play, cf. I iii 93, II ii 1-28, II iii 1, III i 18-19, 66-67, IV i 212, 282. For a more thorough discussion of Shylock's relationship to a devil cf. Chapter 5., section f.iii.); swine (Shylock, as a Jew, is forbidden to eat pork, cf. I iii 29, and Launcelot refers to raising the price of pork in III v 20-22); publicans (Shylock refers to Antonio as a fawning publican in I iii 36); physicians (cf. Chapter 4 below on Antonio as an Anatomy Subject for the significance of physicians and surgeons in *The Merchant of Venice*); mercy and sacrifice (cf. Chapter 6 on Justice and Mercy, below); righteousness and repentance (cf. Chapter 6 on Justice and Mercy, below); daughter (The role of daughter is significant for both Portia and Jessica as their circumstances have been fixed by their fathers, cf. Chapter 3., section 2); blindness and dumbness (on the significance of speechless messages cf. Chapter 2., section 8.a., below; for blindness cf. Chapter 6., sections 2.a.iii. and 4.a., below); gold, silver (not only the gold and silver of the caskets, but Shylock's obsession with his treasury as reported by Salerio in II viii 15-22, and Shylock's own confused, repetitive exchange with Tubal in III i 72-110, cf. also Chapter 5 on The Jew: Alien and Usurer); wolves (Shylock's relationship with the wolf will be discussed later in this chapter); parental rebellion (cf. Jessica's rebellion against her father in eloping with a Christian, and Launcelot's teasing of Old Gobbo in II ii 42-93) and divine justice (cf. Chapter 6 on Justice and Mercy, below).

I am grateful to Dr. David Daniell for pointing this connection out to me.

74. Peacham, *His graviora*, p.165
75. Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Clerk's Tale', *The Canterbury Tales*, Fragment IV (Group E), edited F. N. Robinson, (Oxford, 1953), pp.101-114
76. Job's patience under the trials sent by God to test him appears in the Old Testament in the Book of Job. The first three chapters retail Job's sufferings: the slaughter of his cattle, sheep and servants, the death of his sons and the infliction of a plague of boils all over his body. Chapters 3-37 contain a debate between Job and various others on Man's subservience to God. Chapters 38-41 contain the Lord's answer to Job, and the final chapter gives Job's answer, and God's acceptance and blessing of Job. Job became the archetype of the man who endures appalling sufferings with an acceptance which, although founded in his belief in God, is close to the classical precepts of the stoics.
77. Laurence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth, 1979), p.74
78. Francis Petrarch, *The Sonnets of Petrarch* translated by Joseph Auslander (London, 1931), p.156)

79. Anthony Mortimer, *Petrarca's Canzoniere in the English Renaissance* (Minerva Italica, 1975), p.12
80. Ibid, p.74
81. The story of St. Ursula appears in *The Golden Legend* which was originally written in Latin by Jacobus de Voragine in the second half of the thirteenth century. It proved to be very popular, and was translated into English by an anonymous writer in 1450. Caxton made another translation, using the older English translation and a French translation, which he published in 1483, and which was subsequently printed several times by Wynkyn de Worde. St. Ursula's story appears under October 21, the Feast day of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, who accompanied her on her ship of pilgrimage to Rome, and who were martyred by the Hun, together with assorted Bishops, at Cologne on their return journey to Britain, from whence they had come. St. Ursula herself spurned the marriage offer of the Hun prince, and was killed by an arrow.  
  
St. Ursula's embarkation appears in the cycle of large paintings, the *Legend of S. Ursula*, which form the best work of the Venetian artist Vittore Carpaccio (c1460/5-1523/6), and the earliest of which is dated 1490. They are now in the Accademia in Venice.
82. Willet, *De Ecclesia*, no.18.
83. J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, translated by Jack Sage, (London, 1962), p.295
84. Thomas Watson, *The Shyppe of fooles*, (London, 1517), no.CIIII, sig.Dd3<sup>v</sup>. This is the second edition, the original having been published in 1509.
85. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6 on Justice and Mercy.
86. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, (1678)
87. Whitney, *Nimium rebus ne fide secundis*, p.59
88. Peacham, *Ni undas ni ventos*, p.60
89. P.S., *Sic terras turbine perslat*, p.166
90. Petrarch, *Physicke*, Book 1, Dialogue 17, p.21<sup>r</sup>
91. Vaenius, *By continuance*, p.211
92. Ayres, *Persevere*, no.35. Both Vaenius and Ayres use the emblem to show that the lover will gain his mistress if he pursues her with determination.
93. Wither, *Non uno sterniturictu*, p.29, Book 1, Emblem XXIX
94. Willet, no.80
95. Whitney, *Amicitia, etiam post mortem durans*, p.62
96. Daly, *Alciatus, Amicitia etiam post mortem durans* (Friendship lasting even after death), no.172 (numbering is from the 1551 edition)  
  
The elm, withering because of old age, and bare of leaves,  
the shady foliage of the green grape-vine has embraced.  
It acknowledges the changes of nature, and grateful to its parent  
renders the mutual rights of service and by its own  
example it advises us to seek such friends  
as the last day, death, would not separate from the pact of friendship.
97. Vaenius, *Love after death*, p.244
98. This is closer to Combe's emblem 82 (sig.Ff<sup>r</sup>) of the oak and the ivy, which reverses the meaning of Whitney's and Vaenius' elm and vine:  
*Ungratefull men breed great offence,*

*As persons void of wit or sence,*  
 The Oke doth suffer the yong Iwie wind  
 Up by his sides, till it be got on hie;  
 But being got aloft, it so doth bind,  
 It kills the stocke that it was raised by,  
 So some prove so unthankfull and unkind  
 To those on whom they chiefly do rely,  
 By whom they first were called to their state,  
 They be the first (I say) give them the mate.

This expresses Falstaff's view of his relationship with Hal, although the true situation is that Hal has matured both as a prince and as a man, and has accepted the necessity of breaking away from his erstwhile mentor. Shakespeare in this instance subverts the familiar emblem by associating its accepted meaning with the false (Falstaff's) view.

99. The story of the golden fleece appears in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and, although it is likely that Shakespeare had read the Latin original, he was certainly very familiar with the English translation of it by Arthur Golding, which first appeared in 1565-7, and in further versions in 1575, 1587, 1603 and 1612. The golden fleece legend appears in Book 7, 11,1-219, and Shakespeare was to echo Golding's translation of Medea's speech in Prospero's invocation in *The Tempest*:

Ye Ayres and windes; ye Elves of Hilles, of Brookes, of Woods alone,  
 Of standing Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everychone.  
 Through helpe of whom (the crooked bankes much wondring at the thing)  
 I have compelled streames to run cleane backward to their spring.  
 By charmes I make the calme Seas rough, and make ye rough Seas plaine  
 And cover all the Skie with Cloudes, and chase them thence againe.  
 By charmes I rayse and lay the windes, and burst the Vipers jaw,  
 And from the bowels of the Earth both stones and trees doe drave,  
 Whole woods and Forestes I remove; I make the Mountaines shake,  
 And even the Earth it selfe to grone and fearfully to quake.  
 I call up dead men from their graves; and thee O lightsome Moone  
 I darken oft, though beaten brasse abate thy perill soone  
 Our Sorcerie dimmes the Morning faire, and darkes ye Sun at Noone.

*Metamorphosis* Book 7, 11,265-277

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves;  
 And ye that on the sands with printless foot  
 Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him  
 When he comes back; you demi-puppets that  
 By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,  
 Whereof the eve not bites; and you whose pastime  
 Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice  
 To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid -  
 Weak monsters though ye be - I have bedimm'd  
 The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,  
 And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault  
 Set roaring war, To the dread rattling thunder  
 Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak  
 With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory  
 Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up  
 The pine and cedar, Graves at my command  
 Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth,  
 By my so potent art,

(*The Tempest* V i 33-50)

Shakespeare was probably also familiar with the story from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* of 1390, edited by G. C. Macaulay (Oxford, 1901), where it appears in Book 5, ll.3247-3926

100. Whitney, p.203
101. Green, *Shakespeare*, p.413-4, and Green, *Whitney*, p.385
102. Peacham, p.54, *In actione consistit*
103. Most notably Harold C. Goddard in 'The Three Caskets', *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, (Chicago, 1951),
104. In Shakespeare's source *Il Pecorone*, Day 4, Story 1, Ansaldo, the Antonio figure, is Gianetto's (Bassanio's) godfather.
105. Medea's story appears in Golding, Book 7, ll.1-543 and Gower, Book 5, ll.3247-4222, although neither refer to the bloodthirsty murder of her younger brother. This can be found in *The Thre First bookes of Ovids De Tristibus* (London, 1572) translated into English by Thomas Churchyarde. The passage appears in the third book, Elegy 9, Folio 24:
- ... And of Absirtes cruell death, a proper name is growne ...  
 The wicked wight Medea here, from father fleing fast,  
 Her rowing owres upon this coast, (men saye the first time cast) ...  
 ... When hasting shippes wyth speedy pace, to drawe more neare she spyde,  
 By craft we must my father flee, (we are betrayde) she cryde  
 Whyle she for counsell paused then, and loked round about,  
 In sight at last her brother sawe, amids her deepest doubt,  
 Whome when she spyde, forth wyth she sayd; I dare us wel assure,  
 My brothers death the cause shalbe, our safety to procure.  
 He all unwares and dreadinge nought, her cancred cruell spight,  
 Into his syde her bloody sword, she thrust with raging might,  
 Her blade pluckt back from gored syde, she rend wyth ruthful wound,  
 And members mincte in peeces small, she cast about the ground,  
 And that her father might this knowe, on rocke whereby she past,  
 His woful handes and bloody head, wyth sleight she fixed fast,  
 Wyth wayling new her aged sire, for this did make delay,  
 And sobbing sore the fleshe toke up, she safely scape away.
106. Golding only refers to the burning of Jason's new bride briefly, but Gower is more forthcoming:
- Medea with hire art hath wrought  
 Of cloth of gold a mantel riche,  
 Which semeth worth a kingesriche,  
 And that was unto Creusa sent  
 In name of yifte and of present,  
 For Sosterhode hem was betuene;  
 And whan that yonge freisshe queene  
 That mantel lappeth hire aboute,  
 Anon therof the fyr sprong oute  
 And brente hir bothe fleissh and bon.
- 11.4200-4209
107. Whitney, p.214
108. Daly, *Alciatus, The ignorant rich man*, no.204:
- Phrixus, enthroned on the precious fleece, is crossing the waters,  
 and without fear he bestrides the golden sheep through the sea.  
 What does this signify? A man of dull wit but rich treasure,  
 whom the whim of his wife or servant manipulates.
109. Whitney, p.214
110. P.S., *Pretium non vile laborum*, p.49

111. Daniel, sig.B8<sup>v</sup>
112. John Russell Brown, *The Merchant of Venice*, Arden Edition, (London, 1955), p.7, note to I i 50.
113. Green, *Shakespeare*, p.140
114. Whitney, p.108.
115. Daly, *Alciatus*, no.24
116. Ibid, Marquale's Italian edition, published in Lyon, 1551, no.16 (Alciati emblem 18)
117. Combe, no.1, sig.A6<sup>v</sup>
118. Green, *Shakespeare*, pp.140-141
119. Combe, no.6, sig.B1<sup>r</sup>
120. Peacham, *Per far denari*, p.205
121. Petrarch, *Physicke*, Book 1, Dialogue 50, p.74<sup>r</sup>
122. Whitney, pp.24, 100, 124, 141, 160 and 226.
123. Ibid, p.28.
124. Ibid, p.24
125. Ibid, p.124
126. cf. *Richard II*  
Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man! (III ii 130)  
*I Henry IV*  
Why, what a candy deal of courtesy  
This fawning greyhound then did proffer me! (I iii 251-252)  
*Julius Caesar*  
... I mean, sweet words,  
Low-crooked curtsies, and base spaniel fawning. (III i 42-43)  
*Hamlet*  
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp  
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee  
Where thrift may follow fawning. (III ii 58-60)  
*Antony and Cleopatra*  
... The hearts  
That spaniel'd me at heels, to whom I gave  
Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets  
On blossoming Caesar. (IV xii 20-23)
127. Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, edited by J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth, 1969)
128. Peacham, *Aula*, p.206
129. Whitney, *Nec sibi, nec alicui*, p.184
130. James Astry, *The Royal Politician represented in One Hundred Emblems* (London, 1683). This was a translation of the Spanish *Idea de un Principe politico Christiano* (Milan, 1642) by Diego de Saavedra Fajardo
131. Ibid, Volume I, p.164
132. Barclay, stanza 8, pp.211<sup>v</sup>, 212<sup>r</sup>, sig.Nn1<sup>v</sup>, Nn2<sup>r</sup>

133. Ibid, *A briefe addition of the singularitie of some newe fooles*, pp.256<sup>v</sup>,257<sup>v</sup>, sig.Uu4<sup>v</sup>,Uu5<sup>v</sup>
134. cf. *1 Henry VI*  
 Thee I'll chase hence, thou wolf in sheep's array,  
 Out tawny-coats! Out, scarlet hypocrite! (I iii 55-56)
- 2 Henry VI*  
 Seems he a dove? His feathers are but borrow'd,  
 For he's disposed as the hateful raven,  
 Is he a lamb? His skin is surely lent him,  
 For he's inclin'd as is the ravenous wolf,  
 Who cannot steal a shape that means deceit? (III i 75-79)
- Romeo and Juliet*  
 Dove-feather'd raven! wolfish-ravening lamb! (III ii 76)
135. Alexander Barclay, *The Mirrour of Good Maners, containing the foure Cardinal Vertues, compiled in Latin by Dominike Mancin and translated into English by Alexander Barclay, priest, and monk of Ely.*, Bound at the back of the 1570 edition of *The ship of fooles*, sig.C4<sup>r</sup>
136. Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Rome, 1603) was translated into English in 1709, no.150, p.38,
137. Whitney, p.100
138. Ripa, 1709 ed. no.31, p.8
139. Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse uppon usurye* (1572), Epistle
140. This is probably because the wolf is associated with avarice and its hunger for flesh is related to greed for gold, cf. Wilson's Epistle above, and generally with cruelty. Whitney has an emblem which relates man's inhumanity to man, and although the wolf is not mentioned in the verse, the motto is *Homo homini lupus* 'Man a wolf to man', p.144
141. Brant, *Of Borrowing too much*, no.25, pp.118-119
142. Barclay, *Of them that are alway borowing*, motto, stanza 9, pp.48<sup>v</sup>,49<sup>r</sup>,50<sup>r</sup>, sig.J6<sup>v</sup>,J1<sup>r</sup>,J2<sup>r</sup>
143. Godyere, no.10, p.19
144. cf. *1 Henry VI*  
 I wish some ravenous wolf had eaten thee. (V iv 31)
- 2 Henry VI*  
 For he's inclin'd as is the ravenous wolf, (III i 78)
- Romeo and Juliet*  
 Dove-feather'd raven! wolfish-ravening lamb! (III ii 76)
- Henry VIII*  
 ... Attend; this holy fox,  
 Or wolf, or both - for he is equal rav'nous, (I i 158-159)
145. Barclay, stanza 2, p.188<sup>r</sup>, sig.Jj2<sup>r</sup>
146. Ibid, stanzas 9,11, p.136<sup>v</sup>, sig.24<sup>v</sup>
147. Brant, *Doing evil and not being on guard*, no.69, p.233
148. Barclay, stanzas 1,2,3,5,12, pp.135<sup>v</sup>,136<sup>r</sup>,136<sup>v</sup>,137<sup>r</sup>, sig.23<sup>v</sup>,24<sup>r</sup>,24<sup>v</sup>,25<sup>r</sup>

149. Whitney, p.94
150. Daly, *Alciatus*, no.79
151. Whitney, p.37
152. Daly, *Alciatus*, no.181
153. Whitney, p.100
154. III i 85ff
155. Whitney, p.169
156. P.S., p.367,370:  

A certaine Ape being brought up in a usurers house, who was altogether delighted in counting of his money, spying upon a time his master playing, and toying with his money upon a table, when his master was at dinner he crept in at a window, and got him to the heape of money, where imitating his master, after that he had delighted himselfe enough with turning and tossing the money to and fro, at the last he began to throw it out at the window into the streete as fast as he could. With which sight, whether the passingers by were more delighted, or the Usurer grieved, I list not here to debate, having enough to do to laugh at this usurer, and the like, who heape up great summes of money, and leave it either to their brother or nephewe, or else to dicers, whoremasters, gluttons and the like, scarcely ever remembring this excellent and golden sentence, *Malè paria, malè dilabatur*, Things evill got, are evill spent.
157. *Hamlet*, Arden edition, edited by Harold Jenkins, (London, 1982), note to III iv 196, p.331
158. The modern term 'to make a monkey of someone' was apparently in use in Elizabethan times. A woodcut of c1480 by an anonymous Nuremburg artist, illustrated in Alison G. Stewart, *Unequal Lovers* (New York, 1978) p.106, shows a couple embracing surmounted by a monkey looking in a mirror. While the young man fondles the girl's breast, she reaches behind him into his purse. The inscription explains that the woman 'makes a monkey' of her lover.
159. Barclay, *Of him that is gelous over his wife, and watcheth her wayes without cause or evident token of her misliving*, stanza 3, p.63<sup>v</sup>, sig.L3<sup>v</sup>
160. Brant, no.32, p.135
161. cf *The Winter's Tale* IV iv 256-259:  

Autolycus:        Here's one to a very doleful tune: how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden, and how she long'd to eat adders' heads and toads carbonado'd.
162. This symbolic signalling of atmosphere was also used in painting, as in Giotto's 'Kiss of Judas' in his frescoes in the Arena Chapel, Padua, where the backgrounds are a uniform bright blue, but the soldiers' torches indicate that the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane is taking place at night. Giotto (1266/7 or less probably 1276-1337) painted these frescoes c1306. They were completed by 1313 at the latest.
163. Robert Farley, *Lychnocausia* (London, 1635), no.50
164. Whitney, p.183, *Qui me alit me extinguit*, ('Who nourishes me extinguishes me').
165. I Corinthians, 8.14
166. *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo* may be the oldest emblem book. They were supposed to have been written in ancient Egypt and translated into Greek



- towards the end of the fifth century. A copy was printed in 1551 as *Hieroglyphics*, from which version Green translates this passage.
- 167, Green, *Shakespeare*, p.456
- 168, This purification ceremony may stem from the Roman Catholic festival of Candlemas which is the feast of the Purification of the Virgin, and which has a procession of candles. The candle is also a symbol of the light of faith, and as such is carried by the personified Faith in paintings; James Hall, *Hall's Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, (London, 1974), p.251
- 169, Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles* (London, 1587), Volume 3, Part i, p.724 for the year 1483
- 170, Green, *Shakespeare*, pp. 151-152, Green lists the following emblem writers as among those using the symbol; Symeoni, *Distichi Morali* (1561); Paradin, *Devises Héroïques* (1562); Giles Corrozet, *Hecatomgraphie* (1540); Boisard and Messin, *Emblems*, (1588); Joachim Camerarius, *Ex Valatilibus et Insectis* (1596); Otho Vaenius, *Emblemes of Love with Verses in Latin, English and Italian* (1608).
- 171, This is used by Symeoni and Paradin.
- 172, Whitney, p.141

## Chapter 2 - The Caskets

- 1, Hermann Ulrici, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art* (London, 1889), Volume II, pp.119-20
- 2, Ibid., p.120
- 3, *Gesta Romanorum*, History 32, reproduced in Appendix V, *The Merchant of Venice* Arden edition, pp.172-174
- 4, Barbara K. Lewalski, 'Biblical Allusion and Allegory in *The Merchant of Venice*', *SQ XIII*, (1962), pp.328-343, p.336
- 5, Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, translated by Edwin H. Zeydel, (New York, 1944), no.15, p.95
- 6, Matthew, 13, 44.
- 7, W. H. Auden, 'Brothers and Others', *The Dyer's Hand and other essays*, (London, 1963), pp.218-237, p.222
- 8, Nicholas Hilliard, Miniature portrait of a young gentleman (c1587), Vellum, 13.6 x 7.3 cm, Salting Bequest, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Inscribed: *Dat poenas laudata fides* (My praised faith causes my sufferings).
- 9, Richard G. Moulton, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (Oxford, 1885), pp.52-53
- 10, George Wither, in his *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635), Emblem XX, Book 3, p.154, shows this scene, although his verse does make reference to the religious symbolism involved.
- 11, Sigurd Burckhardt, 'The Merchant of Venice: The Gentle Bond', *ELH XXIX*, No.3, (September 1962), pp.239-262, pp.247-248, (his italics)
- 12, Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (London, 1586), 'Perfidus familiaris' third stanza, p.141.
- 13, Mary Judith Dunbar, '"To the Judgement of your Eye": Iconography and the Theatrical Art of *Pericles*' in *Shakespeare, Man of the Theatre* edited by Kenneth Muir, Jay L. Halio, D. J. Palmer (London and Toronto, 1983)

14. James Hall, *Hall's Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (London, 1974), pp.81
15. Hans Holbein the Younger, *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve*, ('*The Ambassadors*') signed and dated 1533, The National Gallery, London
16. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna or a Garden of Heroical Devises, furnished, and adorned with Emblemes and Impresas of sundry natures, Newly devised, moralized, and published* (London, 1612), *Nec metuas nec optes*, p.8
17. Wither, *In hunc intuens pius esto*, Emblem, VIII, Book 1, p.8
18. Francis Petrarch, *Physicke Against Fortune* translated by Thomas Twyne, (1579), Book II, Dialogue III, 'Of Pryde', p.301<sup>v</sup>
19. Matthew, 23, 27-28.
20. Matthew, 23, 17, 19
21. *Hall's*, pp.210-211.
22. Peter M. Daly, *Andreas Alciatus*, (Toronto, 1985), *Dicta septem sapientum*, no. 200-1
23. Whitney, p.130
24. Ripa, *Iconologia*, (Rome, 1603), English translation 1709, no.13, p.4
25. *Ibid.*, no.251, p.63
26. Peacham, *Pilautia*, p.5
27. *A Myrrour for Magistrates* (1559). This is a collection of 19 moral tales concerning the fatal mistakes of those in positions of great power and greatness, ending with the death of Edward IV, edited by William Baldwin. A second edition (1563) was enlarged to 25 such stories, but the third (1574), edited by John Higgins, returns to classical times and includes several obscure Roman figures. The fourth edition (1578) included more English characters. The book continued in popularity for fifty years, with a final count of 98 figures, one of whom described is Jane Shore (see Chapter 1, pp.76-77). The book had tremendous success, and over thirty of its stories were used by dramatic poets.
28. Jan van Eyck, *The Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami*, ('*The Arnolfini Marriage*'), signed and dated 1434, The National Gallery, London
29. Alexander Barclay, *The ship of Fooles*, (1570), stanzas 1,2,3, pp.112<sup>v</sup>,113<sup>r</sup>, sig.T4<sup>v</sup>,T5<sup>r</sup>
30. *King Lear*, V iii 261-263:  

She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;  
 If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
 Why, then she lives.
31. John Russell Brown, *The Merchant of Venice*, Arden edition (1955), note to II ix 69, p.67
32. *Ibid*, p.67
33. Thomas Whythorne, *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne*, edited by J. Osborn, (London, 1962), pp.115-116
34. Marvin Spevack, *A complete and systematic concordance to the works of Shakespeare*, (Hildesheim, 1968-70)
35. Russell Brown, note to II ix 66, p.67. The *White Devil* quotation runs:  

She's poisoned  
 By the fumed picture, 'Twas her custom nightly,

Before she went to bed, to go and visit  
Your picture, and to feed her eyes and lips  
On the dead shadow.

36. Sigmund Freud, 'The Theme of the Three Caskets' in *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, (1913)
37. Petrarch, Book I, 9th Dialogue, 'Of Eloquence', p.8v
38. Whitney, pp.60-1
39. Andrew Willet, *Sacrorum emblematum centuria Una*, (1592) no.31
40. Barclay, *Of to much speaking or babbling*, stanza 9, p.39r, sig.G3r
41. John Doeblir, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures: studies in Iconic Imagery*, (Albuquerque, 1974), p.46
42. Russell Brown, note to II vii 51, p.59
43. Moulton, p.54
44. Richard Henze, 'Which is the Merchant here? And which the Jew?', *Criticism* 16 (1974), p.295
45. Russell Brown, note to III ii 63, p.80
46. Moulton, p.55
47. Russell Brown, note to III ii 106, pp.82-83 (his italics)
48. Wither, *Musica serva dei*, Book 2, Emblem III, p.65
49. F. D. Hoeniger, 'Musical Cures of Melancholy and Mania in Shakespeare', in *Mirror up to Shakespeare: Essays in Honour of G. R. Hibbard*, edited by J. C. Gray, (Toronto, 1984), pp.55-67, p.57
50. Ibid, p.59
51. Ibid, p.60
52. Ibid, p.65, quoting the astronomer and astrologer, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630)
53. J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* translated from Spanish by Jack Sage, (London, 1962), pp.90, 336
54. Irving I. Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry*, (New York, 1970), p.45.
55. *The Adoration of the Magi*, Jan Gossaert (called Mabuse), (c1506), The National Gallery, London
56. *The Oxford Book of Carols*, edited by Percy Dearmer, R. Vaughan Williams, Martin Shaw (London, 1928), Carol No.195, pp.235-5. The carol was originally written c1857 by John Henry Hopkins (1820-1891)
57. The kings' names were traditional long before the carol was written. They may stem from a ninth century pontifical at Ravenna (James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (London, 1974) p.5) and were certainly established by the time Jacobus de Voragine came to write *The Golden Legend* in the thirteenth century. They are referred to as  
     In Greek their names are Appellius, Amerius, and Damaseus; in Hebrew, Galgalat, Malgalat and Sarachin; in Latin, Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior,  
     (Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, translated by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (Salem, New Hampshire, 1969), p.85)
58. Hall, p.6. Hall ascribes this reading of the symbolism to Bede (c673-735)

## Chapter 3 - The Rings: Love and Marriage

1. John Russell Brown, *The Merchant of Venice*, Arden edition, (1955), Introduction p. xxxiii.
2. Toby Lelyveld, *Shylock on the Stage* (London, 1960), p.71
3. *Encyclopedia Britannica* Vol. XXIII, p.349
4. William Jones, *Finger-Ring Lore* (London 1877), pp.86-87
5. Ibid, Chapter VIII
6. Ibid, p.393
7. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, (1612), *Una dolo Divum*, p.87
8. Samuel Daniel, *The Worthy tract of Paulus Iovius contayning a Discourse of rare inventions both Militarie and Amorous called Imprese*, (London, 1585), sig.H4<sup>r</sup>,H4<sup>v</sup>,H5<sup>r</sup>
9. Jones, p.351
10. *Encyclopedia Britannica* Vol. XVII, p.349
11. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635), *Iusque a la Mort*, Book 2, Emblem XXXVII, p.99
12. Jan Baptist Bedaux, 'The reality of symbols: the question of disguised symbolism in Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*', *Simiolus* XVI (1986) No.1, pp.5-28, n.29, p.13
13. Jones, p.310
14. Thomas Comber, *The Occasional offices of Matrimony* (London, 1679), p.107
15. Bedaux, pp.11-12
16. Comber, p.107
17. Laurence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth, 1977) p.30
18. Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London and New York, 1984) pp.78-79
19. Ibid, p.79
20. Ibid, p. 78.
21. Stone, p. 31.
22. Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals* (London, 1686, but written about a century before), p.219
23. 'Friends' in the Elizabethan context referred to guardians and friends of the family rather than personal intimates. They were often responsible for arranging marriages, and were not obliged to consult or even inform the prospective pair. In Scotland 'friend' is still used to mean relative or member of the family.  
  
In order not to digress too much from the play in hand, I have only touched on the enormous literature concerning the marriage issue in *Measure for Measure*
24. E. A. M. Colman, *The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare* (London 1974), pp.76-77
25. Swinburne, p.208

26. Stone, p.128.
27. G. R. Hibbard, 'Love, Marriage and Money in Shakespeare's Theatre and Shakespeare's England' in *The Elizabethan Theatre VI* (Ontario 1975), p.154
28. Houlbrooke, p.21
29. Notably Harold C. Goddard, 'The Three Caskets' in *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1951)
30. Stone, p.128
31. *St. Eligius weighing the Wedding Rings of a Betrothed Couple*, Petrus Christus, (1449), Lehman Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art
32. David R. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock, Seventeenth Century Dutch Marriage Portraiture* (Michigan 1982), p.62. The painting is in Toledo Museum, Ohio.
33. Roy Strong, *The English Icon; Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture* (New York 1969), p.38
34. Hans Holbein the younger was sent by Henry VIII to paint Anne as a prospective bride for the King. Henry was much taken with the looks of the lady and married her by proxy, but on meeting her in the flesh, it was clear that Holbein's portrait had flattered her. Henry called her 'the Flanders mare', and apparently never consummated the marriage, which was declared null in July 1540. The miniature is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
35. Houlbrooke, p.74
36. Ibid, p.74
37. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (Leyden, 1586), p.99
38. Peter M. Daly, *Andreas Alciati*, (Toronto, 1985), no.212
39. Houlbrooke, p.75
40. Corrozet's *Hecatomgraphie* was printed in 1540. Its Emblem 83 is reproduced in Henry Green, *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers* (London, 1870), p.418, and he translates the verse on p.419 as:  
     As, for the precious stone  
     The ring of gold is coin'd;  
     So, beauty in its grace  
     Should be to goodness join'd.
41. Stone, p.72
42. III i 103-105
43. Jones, p.298
44. Ibid, pp.158-159
45. Published in Paris, 1547
46. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, History of Science Society Publications, New Series IV (New York, 1941), Vol. VI, Chapter XXXIX, 'The Lore of Gems', pp.298-324, p.306, quoting Rueus
47. Comber, pp.105-106
48. The relationship between the purity of gold and the purity of love can be seen in Herrick's *A Ring Presented to Julia (Hesperides)*, *The Poems of Robert Herrick*, edited by L. C. Martin (London, 1965), pp.65-66:  
     Julia, I bring  
     To thee this Ring,  
     Made for thy finger fit;  
     To shew by this,

That our love is  
 (Or sho'd be) like to it ...  
 ... And as this round  
 Is no where found  
 To flaw, or else to sever;  
 So let our love  
 As endless prove;  
 And pure as Gold for ever.

49. Peacham, *Amor coniugalis aeternus*, p.92

50. Comber, p.106

51. Smith, p.75

52. Ibid, p.78

53. Ibid, p.76. Smith cites Ben Jonson's *The Silent Woman* (1609);

Lady Haughty: We see no ensiegns of a wedding here, no character of a  
 bridale; where be out skarfes and our gloves. (III vi)

and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady* (1616);

If my wedding smock were on  
 Were the gloves brought and given, the license come. (I i)

cf. also Herrick's *To the Maids to walke abroad in Hesperides* (*The Poems of Robert Herrick* edited by L. C. Martin (London, 1965), p.216;

What Posies for our Wedding Rings;  
 What Gloves we'll give, and Ribanings. (11,27-28)

54. as in Herrick's *One a pair of gloves in The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*  
 edited by L. C. Martin (Oxford, 1956), pp.432-33

Faire Cloris, faire, if that your courteous eye  
 Vouchsafe to find an opportunitye  
 To question mee, what I within mee beare  
 Hearken, Ile tell you gently in your eare,  
 Within inclos'd, here I present a glove  
 Perfumed onely with the doners Love,  
 To make itt odoriferous I presume  
 A kiss from of your hands a rich perfume;  
 Are they not white enough? the donor sent  
 Them in there purity deficient  
 One pupose for to gaine a purer dye  
 By borrowinge a fairer Livery  
 From your smowy hand, whose vertue's such  
 That itt will clarify even with a touch,  
 Are they too bigg? and will not neatly fitt  
 Your hand, draw them but one and they will sitt  
 Soe close unto your hand as if they meant  
 To keep itt in a soft imprisonment,  
 Are they too little for you hand, they prove  
 Farre lesser as a gift, then as a glove,  
 Your gracious acceptance may prevent  
 The one, the other beare unto event,  
 Rather then they should be casheen'd your hand  
 They would enlarge themseves without commande  
 They're very plaine, the plainer that they bee  
 The lesse endebted to curiositye.  
 Noe wanton needle busily hath trac't  
 The hand of art in trimme devises, grac't  
 With rich embroiderings as if

The tender needle tooke itt as a greife  
 To wound the harmlesse glove; know this the rose  
 Betweene the Lillyes durst not interpose  
 Herselfe; your hand they durst not come too nigh  
 Least they should blush to a deformitye,  
 But why doe I excuse there plainenesse, thence  
 Fondly to make a slender recompence;  
 My masters will is this, that they should bee  
 Plaine as the embleme of sinceritye,  
 These are the faults which may the glove befall  
 Accept them and there is noe fault att all ...

Shakespeare uses the accepted symbolism of the glove as a promise of fidelity in a characteristic twist in *Love's Labour's Lost* where Katherine mocks the conventional love token sent her by Dumain, shrewdly seeing that the men's oaths are worth little, a fact which the audience have already witnessed:

Princess: But, Katherine, what was sent to you from fair Dumain?  
 Katherine: Madam, this glove,  
 Princess: Did he not send you twain?  
 Katherine: Yes, madam; and, moreover,  
 Some thousand verses of a faithful lover;  
 A huge translation of hypocrisy,  
 Vilely compil'd, profound simplicity.

(*Love's Labour's Lost* V ii 47-52)(

55. Shakespeare does make use of strong identification of a person with a ring in *Cymbeline* where Imogen is identified with the diamond ring she gives Posthumus.
56. The fifteenth century pair portraits by Robert Campin in The National Gallery, London, are, according to Smith 'the first surviving works of their kind' p.2
57. Smith, p.2
58. Roy Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature* (London, 1984), pp.75-81
59. Norman K. Farmer Jr., *Poets and the Visual Arts in Renaissance England*, (Austin, 1984), p.21
60. Margaret F. Thorp, 'Shakespeare and the Fine Arts', *PMLA* 46 (1931), p.684
61. Strong, *The English Icon*, p.30
62. Nicholas Hilliard, *Unknown Man clasping a hand from a cloud* (1588), Victoria and Albert Museum, London [P.21-1942], 6 x 5 cm
63. Isaac Oliver, *Unknown Man* (c1595-1600), Victoria and Albert Museum, London [P.5-1917], 6 x 5.2 cm
64. Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, pp.166-167
65. Otho Vaenius, *Amorum Emblemata* (Antwerp, 1616), *Love liveth by fyre*, p.229
66. Whitney, p.183
67. Smith, p.17
68. Francis Petrarch, *Physicke Against Fortune*, translated by Thomas Twyne, 1579, Book I, 65th Dialogue, p.89
69. Sigurd Burckhardt, 'The Merchant of Venice: The Gentle Bond', *ELH* XXIX (September 1962), pp.239-262, p.243

## Chapter 4 - Antonio as an Anatomy Subject

1. Marvin Spevack, *A complete and systematic concordance to the works of Shakespeare*, (Hildesheim 1968-70)
2. M. H. Spielmann, *The Iconography of Andreas Vesalius* Research Studies in Medical History No. 3 (Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, London, 1925), p.ix (Foreword II by Arthur Keith)
3. John Banister, *The Historie of Man, sucked from the sappe of the most approved Anathomistes, in this present age, compiled in most compendious fourme, and now published in English, for the utilitie of all godly Chirurgians within this Realme, by Iohn Banister, Master in Chirurgerie, and Practitioner in Phisicke* (London, 1578), Dedicatory Epistle, sig.A3<sup>r</sup>
4. e.g. John Doeblner, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures: studies in Iconic Imagery* (Albuquerque, 1974), Nevill Coghill, 'The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy' *E&S* (1950) pp.1-28 and Barbara Lewalski, 'Biblical Allusion and Allegory in *The Merchant of Venice*' *SQ XIII* (1962) pp.328-343
5. William Brockbank, 'Old Anatomical Theatres and What Took Place Therein' *Med. Hist 12* (1968) pp.371-384, p.371
6. William S. Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp - an Iconological Study* (New York, 1958), Introduction p.5
7. *Ibid*, p.26
8. Brockbank, p.375
9. *Ibid*, p.378
10. *Ibid*, p.377
11. Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews (London, 1971), Vol. IV, p.60
12. John Flint South, *Memorials of the Craft of Surgery in England*, edited by D'Arcy Power, with an introduction by Sir James Paget and a preface by the editor (London, 1886), pp.244-245
13. *Ibid*, p.246
14. Brockbank, p.374
15. *Ibid*, p.372
16. *Ibid*, p.372
17. Richard Hosley, 'The Playhouses', Section III in *The 'Revels' History of Drama in English* Vol III 1576-1613 (London, 1975), pp.118-235
18. John Orrell, *The Quest for Shakespeare's Globe* (Cambridge, 1983)
19. John Orrell describes the construction of an *ad triangulum* system of proportion thus:  

The line our men use is the traditional surveyor's line, marked with knots for every perch or rod. When the corners of the square have been pegged they use this line with a similar one to erect two equilateral triangles within the three-rod square [cf red lines in diagram, Illustration 33] ... Through the apexes thus formed they run lines parallel to those of the square, so forming a smaller square within the original [green lines in diagram] ... Now with the three-rod lines they drop perpendiculars from the apexes and at their extremes set new pegs, through which they pass new lines parallel to the remaining sides of the square, this time making a larger square within which the others are contained [black lines in diagram]. (*Ibid*, p.114)



20. Ibid, p.120
21. Ibid, p.149
22. Ibid, p.149
23. Hosley, pp.148-149. The overhanging part of the joist absorbs the weight of the upper storey and distributes the thrust inwards,
24. Brockbank, p.376
25. Hosley p.157. The Fortune contract calls for 'suchelike steares, conveyances, and divisions withoute and within' as at the Globe and the Hope contract for  

two stearecasses without and adjoyninge to the saide Playe house in suche convenient places as shalbe moste fitt and convenient for the same to stande uppon, and of such largenes and height as the stearcasses of the saide playehouse called the Swan nowe are or bee.
26. Hosley, pp.158-164
27. Ibid, p.177
28. Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, (Cambridge, 1980), p.197. Platter was a German travelling in England in 1599. Gurr thinks he describes the Curtain, Hosley presumes it is the Globe.
29. Hosley, pp.161-163
30. Orrell, p.136
31. Hosley, p.161
32. Sidney Young, *The Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* compiled from their records and other sources with illustrations by Austin T. Young (London, 1890), p.335
33. Inigo Jones' theatre was of similar size to that of Padua and these two were the only anatomy theatres built to an elliptical plan.
34. Gurr, p.173
35. Young, p.315
36. *Hamlet*, III iv 212
37. Heckscher, p.28
38. Baldasar Heseler, *Andreas Vesalius' First Public Anatomy at Bologna, 1540 - an eyewitness report*, edited with an introduction, translation into English from the Latin, and notes by Ruben Eriksson (Uppsala, 1959). 15 January, First Anatomical Demonstration, morning, pp.85,87
39. Heckscher, Appendix II, *Historia corporis humani* by Alexander Benedictus (Alessandro Benedetti), p.182
40. Brockbank, p.372
- 41.,. Heckscher, p.32
42. South, pp.137-138
43. Honor Matthews, *Character and Symbol in Shakespeare's Plays* (Cambridge, 1962) and William Moelwyn Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist* (Oxford, 1959)
44. This was emphasised in the RSC production of *The Plantagenets* at the Barbican, 1989, when Richard made a gleeful leap up to the throne and stood triumphantly on the seat.

45. At the age of 29 Vesalius resigned from his post at Padua and became the Court Physician to Charles V. He did no further research.
46. J. B. de C. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley, *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels* (Cleveland and New York, 1950), p.16. Venice allocated an annual subsidy to the University of Padua of 4,000 ducats, plus a share of excise revenue (John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice*, Harmondsworth, 1983, p.285), and considered the institution hers as much as Padua's. Venice also had an advanced and enlightened attitude to medicine: by 1335 the state was paying the salaries of 12 full-time doctor-surgeons, who were obliged to attend an annual course on anatomy, including dissection. In 1368 Venice established the first state-run Medical School, and effectively provided the first national health service in Europe, if not the world (Norwich, p.274)
47. Young, p.320.
48. A contemporary rhyme is quoted in *A Short History of Anatomical Teaching at Oxford* (Oxford, 1950), by Hugh MacDonald Sinclair and A. H. T. Robb Smith, p.13:
- Ann Green was a slippery quean,  
In vain did the jury detect her; -  
She cheated Jack Ketch, and then the vile wretch  
'Scap'd the knife of the learned dissector.
- Anne Green married, had children and lived for a further fifteen years.
49. Heckscher argues that it *is* the Barber's Hall, and points out that Hogarth was a friend of the anatomist Dr. John Freke (1688-1756), p.103
50. South, p.293
51. Heckscher, p.32
52. Ibid, p.100. Shylock's belief in the 'eye for an eye' philosophy will be dealt with in Chapter 6
53. Ibid, p.105
54. Ibid, p.8
55. Ibid, p.14, illustrated in fig.1b
56. Heckscher, p.88
57. Ibid, p.88
58. Dieric Bouts, *The Justice of the Emperor Otto* (1474-5), Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels
59. John Doeblen, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures*; studies in Iconic Imagery, (Albuquerque, 1974), p.57. The carving is in linden wood and was originally displayed in the courthouse in Nuremberg but is now in a museum there.
60. Charles Singer, *The Evolution of Anatomy*, (London, 1925), p.130. Singer points out, for example, that the Vermiform Appendix appears clearly in at least three figures in the *Fabrica*, but is not mentioned in the text.
61. Spielmann, p.132
62. Saunders and O'Malley, p.42
63. Spielmann, p.135
64. Leroy Crummer, 'Early Anatomical Fugitive Sheets', *Annals of Medical History*, Vol. V, No. 3 (1923) pp.189-209. p.195

65. Thomas Geminus, *Compendiosa totius anatomie delineatio*, Facsimile of first English edition of 1553 with text by Nicholas Udall, with an introduction by C. D. O'Malley, (London, 1959), p. 24
66. Heckscher, p.100
67. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford, 1949), p.137
68. Alan Edelstein, *An Unacknowledged Harmony: Philo-Semitism and the survival of European Jewry* (Westport, Connecticut and London, 1982), p.72
69. Ibid, p.71
70. Luke, 4, 23. There may also be a suggestion of the Classical *Nosce te ipsum* which was a popular element in French medical prints, Crummer, p.203
71. Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, (Oxford, 1621), Part 2, Section 1, p.299
72. Ibid, p.299
73. Irving I. Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry* (New York, 1970), p.97
74. John Earle, Bishop of Salisbury, *Micro-cosmographie, or a peece of the World Discovered in essayes and characters*, (London, 1628), Chapter 4, 'A meere dull Physician', sig.B8<sup>r</sup>
75. Ibid, Chapter 44, 'A Surgeon', sig.H4<sup>r</sup>
76. Hugh Latimer, 'A Sermon preached upon the Gospel read in the church the 24 Sondag after Trinitie' in *Friutfull Sermons Preached by the right Reverent Father, and constant Martyr of Iesus Christ, M. Hugh Latimer, newly imprinted with others not heretofore set forth in print* (London, 1607), pp.217<sup>v</sup>, 218<sup>r</sup>, sig.F13<sup>v</sup>, F14<sup>r</sup>
77. Charles Singer and E. Ashworth Underwood, *A Short History of Medicine*, second edition (Oxford, 1962), p.60
78. Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, *Isagogae Breves (A Short Introduction to Anatomy)*, translated with an introduction and historical notes by L. R. Lind, and anatomical notes by Paul G. Roope (Chicago, 1959), p.93
79. Edgar pp.43-45
80. Pierre de La Primaudaye, *The French Academie* (London, 1618) p.564
81. Edgar, pp.43-45
82. Ibid, Plate 15 - an illustration of a medieval manuscript.
83. The Diagram appears in Singer and Underwood, *Short History*, p.46
84. *The Tempest, Winter's Tale, Pericles, Twelfth Night* respectively

#### Chapter 5 - The Jew: Alien and Usurer

1. While the historical context must be taken into account in any study of the text, in *performance* modern views and sympathies can add to the topicality of a production. Part of Shakespeare's genius is that his plays are flexible enough to allow a wide variety of interpretations which relate directly to modern society in a way which they would not have done at the time they were written.
2. D. M. Cohen, 'The Jew and Shylock', *SQ* 31 (1980), pp.53-63, p.53.
3. Ibid., p.63.

4. Ibid., p.61.
5. Toby Lelyveld, *Shylock on the Stage* (London, 1960), p.68.
6. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford, 1949), p.85.
7. Bernard Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock* (New York, 1962), p.30.
8. Roth, p.120.
9. Ibid. pp.141-142. Roth suggests that they in fact retained their Jewish faith, only pretending to conversion, but Jacob Lopes Cardozo, *The Contemporary Jew in the Elizabethan Drama* (New York, originally published Paris, 1925) maintains that they were true convertites. Both argue their cases well, but without further evidence it seems likely that the true state of affairs will never be known.
10. Ibid. pp.140-144.
11. Lelyveld, p.7 n.8. *The Jew of Malta* was performed twice during the weeks 8 June and 15 June at Newington Butts and further performances followed at the Rose Theatre during the weeks of 27 June, 6 and 13 July.
12. Grebanier, p.13
13. This is true of the present century - witness Orson Welles' radio broadcast of the *War of the Worlds* between the wars, in which a large number of Americans panicked in the belief that the Martians had landed.
14. Grebanier, p.31, quoting M. Holmes, *Shakespeare's Public* (London, 1960), p.62
15. Alan Edelstein, *An Unacknowledged Harmony: Philo-Semitism and the Survival of European Jewry* (Connecticut and London, 1982), p.3
16. E. E. Stoll, *Shakespeare Studies* (New York, 1927), Chapter VI 'Shylock', p.284. This notion was prevalent in England as late as the eighteenth century.
17. Ibid., p.286
18. Roth, p.9
19. Ibid., p.57
20. John Day, *Travels of Three English Brothers* (1607)
21. Stoll, p.281
22. Robert South, *Sermons* (London, 1865) Sermon XXV, on Hebrews, 2. 16, p.228
23. Alexander Barclay, *The ship of Fooles* (1570), *Of straunge fooles and infidels, as Sarasins, Paynins, Turkes, and such like*, stanza 6, p.197<sup>v</sup>, sig.Kk5<sup>v</sup>
24. Stoll, p.286, quoting citation in Du Cange, *Judaei*.
25. Ibid., p.274
26. Hermann Sinsheimer, *Shylock: The History of a Character or The Myth of the Jew* (London, 1947), p.115
27. Ibid, p.32
28. Ibid., p.40
29. Ibid., p.116
30. Thomas Jordan, 'The Forfeiture', in *The Royal Arbor of Loyal Poesie* (1664), pp.35-37. According to Stoll, p.255, Macklin apparently kept all this although 'nose and chin enough he had of his own!' Jordan's poem is obviously based on *The Merchant of Venice*, although he uses no names, and

changes the story slightly so that the girl/lawyer turns out to be the Jew's daughter, who is in love with, and eventually marries, the merchant.

31. Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse*, (London, 1579), sig.C6v
32. *Selinus, The Raging Turk* and probably *Three Ladies of London* although the setting of the last is suggested rather than specified.
33. *MV, Travailes of the brothers Sherley and the lost Jew of Venice*.
34. *Machiavellus*
35. *A Christian turn'd Turk*
36. Cardozo, p.53
37. cf. the English term 'The Continent' as if we were not part of Europe, and the appalling sentiment bandied about some years ago 'wogs begin at Calais'
38. Andrew Tretiak, 'The Merchant of Venice and the "Alien" question', *AES V* (1929) pp. 402-409, p.408
39. Ibid, p.402
40. Cardozo quotes p.107
41. Ibid., p.109
42. Tretiak, pp.402, 408.
43. II vii 4-5, III ii 276-282, III iii 26-31, III v 17-36, IV i 35-39, 200-201, 214-218, 344-352.
44. e.g. sharing prayer with a Jew would be totally impossible; Portia expects him to be familiar with the Lord's Prayer; Shylock speaks of the 'stock of Barabas' contemptuously as a Christian, rather than a Jew, might.
45. Edelstein, p.36, quoting Salo W. Baron, *Ancient and Medieval Jewish History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972), p.259
46. G. K. Hunter, 'Elizabethans and Foreigners' in *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition* (Liverpool, 1978)
47. Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300-1660*, Volume Two 1576-1660, Part 1, Book 2 'Emblems and Images', p.228
48. Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (London 1973), p.86
49. Sinsheimer, p.26
50. Grebanier, p.235
51. Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, (Berengarius), *Isagogae Breves*, (Chicago, 1959), translators note, p.37
52. Grebanier, p.190
53. Stoll, p.302
54. Graham Midgley, 'The Merchant of Venice: A Reconsideration', *EC X* (1960), pp.119-33, is the most violent expounder of this theory.
55. Ibid, p.121
56. Stoll, p.269.
57. Quarles' *The Virgin Widow* and *A Spectacle for Usurers* respectively.
58. e.g. Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money* (1598) and Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Night Walker*.
59. Grebanier, p.33

60. Ibid, p.157
61. Ibid, p.79, quoting Aristotle's *Politics I*.
62. Francis Petrarch, *Physicke Against Fortune*, Book 1, 56th Dialogue, pp.78<sup>v</sup>,79<sup>r</sup>
63. Ibid, Book 1, 53rd Dialogue, pp.77<sup>r</sup>,77<sup>v</sup>
64. Alexander Barclay, *The ship of Fooles* (1570), stanzas 1,2,6, pp.5<sup>v</sup>,6<sup>r</sup>, sig.A5<sup>v</sup>,A6<sup>r</sup>
65. Stoll, p.289, quoting Act 37 Henry VIII cap. ix.
66. Ibid., p.289, quoting Act 6 Edward VI cap. xx.
67. Ibid., p.289, quoting Act 13 Elizabeth cap. viii.
68. Ibid., p.291
69. Grebanier, p.88
70. Jeremy Bentham, *Defence of Usury* (Dublin, 1788) first published London, 1787, pp.131-132, 138
71. Grebanier, p.79, quoting St. Ambrose of Milan
72. Roth, pp.113-4
73. Bentham, p.127
74. Grebanier, p.82
75. Ibid, p.83
76. Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse uppon usurye* (1572), Epistle
77. E. C. Pettet, 'The Merchant of Venice and the Problem of Usury', *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association XXXI* (1945), pp.19-33, quote on p.21-22
78. Ibid, p.25
79. Barclay, stanzas 6,7, pp.188<sup>r</sup>,188<sup>v</sup>, sig.Jj2<sup>r</sup>,Jj2<sup>v</sup>
80. Pettet, p.20
81. Wilson, sig.F5<sup>v</sup>
82. Grebanier, p.31
83. Cardozo, p.114
84. Roth, p.3
85. Petrarch, *Physicke*, Book 1, Dialogue 56, p.79<sup>v</sup>
86. Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550-1750* (Oxford, 1985), p.49 - The growth in numbers of Jews in the Venetian ghetto:
 

1552 -	900
1586 -	1,694
1600 -	at least 2,500
87. Ibid., p.61
88. Bob Hodge, 'Marlowe, Marx and Machiavelli: Reading into the Past' in *Literature, Language and Society in England, 1580-1680*, edited by David Aers, Bob Hodge and Gunther Kress (Dublin, 1981), pp.1-22, p.16, quoting Karl Marx *On the Jewish Question*.
89. Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (Methuen, London and New York, 1974), p.8

90. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna* (London, 1612), *in actione consistit*, p.54
91. John Russell Brown, 'Love's Wealth and *The Merchant of Venice*' in *Shakespeare and his Comedies*, (London, 1957), p.64
92. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, (Oxford, 1989)
93. Ibid.
94. C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, 1959), p.167
95. Barclay, stanza 8, p.194<sup>r</sup>, sig.Kk2<sup>r</sup>
96. Petrarch, *Physicke*, Book 2, 13th Dialogue, 'Of money lost', p.187<sup>r</sup>
97. Christopher Marlowe, *the Complete Plays* (Harmondsworth, 1969)
98. David Daniell, 'Shakespeare and the traditions of comedy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, edited by Stanley Wells (Cambridge, 1986), pp.101-121, p.110
99. Ibid, p.110
100. Portia's estate invokes the image of the estates on the mainland around Venice, which were famous for their villas, many of which were designed by one of the most influential architects of the sixteenth century, Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). Palladio's villas became the model for European domestic building, encapsulating as they did the essence of elegance and wealth, coupled with a highly fashionable interest in classical design and harmony. Villas such as La Rotonda (begun c1550), Villa Malcontenta (1560) and Villa Maser (c1560) had a profound influence on the development of architecture in Britain, particularly in the eighteenth century when Palladianism was at its height, although Palladio's influence in Britain appeared much earlier, in the work of the architect Inigo Jones (1573-1652), who was also responsible for the first purpose-built anatomy theatre, for the Barber-Surgeons's, as well as working closely with Ben Jonson on stage sets for various masques.

#### Chapter 6 - Justice and Mercy

1. Lawrence Danson, *The Harmonies of the Merchant of Venice* (New Haven and London, 1978), p.85
2. George W. Keeton, *Shakespeare and his Legal Problems*, (London, 1930), p.13. Most of the information regarding the Elizabethan legal system in this chapter comes from this book.
3. Sir George Carew, *Reports or Causes in Chancery* (London, 1650), known as *Cary's Reports*, p.1
4. Keeton, pp.14-15
5. Ibid, p.19
6. Ibid, p.19
7. Ibid, p.20
8. Ibid, p.20
9. Harold C. Goddard, 'The Three Caskets', *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (1963)
10. Bernard Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock*, (New York, 1962), p.266
11. Ibid, p.268

12. Keeton, p.12
13. E. M. W. Tillyard, 'The Trial Scene in *The Merchant of Venice*', *REL* 2 no. 4 (October 1961), p.52
14. The most thorough recent study of Shakespeare's audience is Andrew Gurr's *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge, 1987)
15. Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God*, (Bryn Mawr, Baltimore, 1907), p.7
16. Ibid, p.17
17. Ibid, p.39-40
18. Ibid, p.41
19. Samuel C. Chew, *The Virtues Reconciled: An Iconographic Study*, (Toronto, 1947), pp.38-39
20. Ibid, p.43
21. Psalter. The glosses are taken from Adam's footnotes.
22. 'Doutles man walketh in a shadowe, and disquieteth him selfe in vaine; he heapeth up riches, and can not tel who shal gather them', Psalm 39, 6
23. Endurance,
24. I swell and become pale in bloody colour.
25. Go and flee,
26. Lost,
27. *The Castell of Perseverance*, ll. 2983-3008, reproduced in an abridged version in Joseph Quincy Adams, *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1926).
28. Ibid, ll. 3009-3012.
29. W. R. Mackenzie, *The English Moralities from the point of view of Allegory*, (New York, 1966) originally published Boston and London, 1914, p.64
30. Food,
31. Adams, *Castell of Perseverance*, ll. 3367-3374
32. Traver, p.109-10
33. Ibid, p.110
34. Ibid, n.18, p.94
35. Ibid, p.154
36. Peter M. Daly, *Andreas Alciatus*, (Toronto, 1985), *Illicitum non sperandum*, no.54
37. Ibid, *nec verbo, nec facto quemquam laedendum*, no.34
38. Geoffrey Whitney, *Whitney's Choice of Emblems*, (1586), p.139
39. Alexander Barclay, *The ship of Fooles*, (1570), stanza 12, p.137<sup>r</sup>, sig.z5<sup>r</sup>
40. Ibid, motto, p.21<sup>r</sup>, sig.D3<sup>r</sup>
41. Thomas Watson, *The Shyppe of fooles*, (London, 1517), no.II, sig.A4<sup>r</sup>
42. Francis Petrarch, *Physicke Against Fortune*, translated by Thomas Twyne, (London, 1579), Book 1, 101st Dialogue 'Of revenge', p.127<sup>v</sup>. His italics,
43. Ibid, Book 1, 101st Dialogue, p.126<sup>v</sup>, 127<sup>r</sup>, 127<sup>v</sup>. His italics,



44. Launcelot Andrews, Bishop of Ely, *Two sermons preached before the King's Majestie at Whitehall*, (London, 1610), Christmas, 1609, pp.21-3
45. Grebanier, p.195
46. L. Tomson, *The New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ, translated out of Greeke by Theod. Beza, Englished by L. Tomson*, (London, 1596). This translation was incorporated into about half of the editions of the Geneva Bible after 1576.
47. Psalm 147, 2
48. William Perkins, *Exposition of the Lord's Praier*, (London, 1592), pp.121-122
49. Ibid, p.130
50. III ii 277. This is Salerio's reportage, but this time there is no need to doubt his accuracy.
51. Traver, p.56
52. Ibid, p.64
53. Chew, p.110
54. Traver, p.53
55. John Doeblner, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures: Studies in Iconic Imagery*, (Albuquerque, 1974), p.56
56. Ripa, *Iconologia*, English translation of 1709, no.164, p.41
57. Daly, *Alciatus*, no.200-201 and Whitney p.130
58. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, (London, 1612) *Que pondere maior*, p.44. The Sword appears on p.43, *Proemio et poena*
59. Ibid, p.44
60. Thomas Combe, *The Theater of Fine Devices*, Facsimile of 1614 edition printed in London (Huntington Library, 1983), no.10, sig.B3<sup>r</sup>
61. John Russell Brown, *The Merchant of Venice* Arden edition, note to III ii 22, p.77
62. Combe, no.14, sig.B5<sup>r</sup>
63. The story appears in Daniel, 5, 1-31:  

thou ... O Belshazzar, hath not humbled thine hearte, ... But hast lift thy selfe up against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of his House before thee and thou and thy princes, thy wives and thy concubines have drinke wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brasse yron, wood and stone, which neither see, neither heare, nor understand; and the God in whose hand thy breath is an all thy wayes, him hast thou not glorified. Then was the palme of the hande sent from him, and hath writen this writing. And this is the writinge that he hath writen, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing, MENE, God hath nombred thy kingdome, and hath finished it; TEKEL, thou art wayed in the balance, and art found to light. PERES, thy kingdome is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. The same night was Belshazzar the king of the Caldeans slaine.

The passage has strong relevance to Shylock. His links with balances are discussed in the chapter, but his downfall is, at least in part, due to his love of gold and silver, his business is broken up and his estate divided between his enemy, Antonio, and the State of Venice.
64. Chew, p.98-99
65. Whitney, p.61. Green translates the Latin tag as

But a prince slow for punishments, swift for rewards;  
 To whomsoever he grieves, how often is he forced to be severe.  
 (Henry Green, *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers* (London, 1870), p.209)

66. P.S., *The Heroical Devises of M. Claudius Paradis*, (London, 1591), p.30
67. Peacham, *Vulnerat ille medemur*, p.83
68. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635), *Lex regit et arma tuentur*, Book 1, Emblem III, p.3
69. Whitney, p.121
70. J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, translated from the Spanish by Jack Sage, (London, 1962), p.169
71. Daly, *Alciatus, Insani gladius*, no.189
72. Whitney, p.31
73. Daly, *Alciatus*, Marquale's Italian translation of Alciati (Lyon, 1551), no.148 (Alciati emblem 172)
74. Wither, *Coecus nil luce iuvatur*, Book 4, Emblem XLV, p.253
75. Ripa, No.142, p.36. His italics.
76. Ibid, No.164, p.41. His italics.
77. *The Parement of Narbonne*, (c1377), Louvre, Paris
78. Wolfgang S. Seiferth, *Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages: Two Symbols in Art and Literature*, translated by Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (New York, 1970), p.7. The cover belongs to Codex Latinus 9383 in Paris. Seiferth illustrates it in fig.6
79. *The Psalter of Blanche of Castile* (c1235), Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, Ms 1186 f.24
80. Seiferth, p.9, describing the Crucifixion scene in the evangelistary of the abbess Uta of Niedermünster, which he illustrates in fig.10
81. Ibid, p.145
82. Ibid, p.64
83. Ibid, p.99
84. Ibid, p.134, Codex Fr.166 fol.44. The Bible is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Illustrated by the Limbourg brothers, it was begun in 1402 and remained uncompleted in 1416 (p.130)
85. Ripa, No.107, p.27. His italics.
86. In 2 Corinthians, 3, 13-14, Paul relates the veil, or blindfold, of the Jews to the veil which Moses wore to hide his face after receiving the ten commandments in order that the Israelites should not see the full glory of God (Exodus 34, 33). Paul comments that the Jews are still blinded by the same veil, which represents the Old Covenant, and is done away with by the acceptance of Christianity.
87. *The Lambeth Bible*, (c1150?), Lambeth Palace Library, London, Ms 3
88. Seiferth, p.41
89. Ibid, p.79
90. Edward Schroder Prior and Arthur Gardner, *An Account of Medieval Figure Sculpture in England*, (Cambridge, 1912), pp.324-5

## Appendix A: The History of Anatomy

1. Charles Singer and E. Ashworth Underwood, *A Short History of Medicine*, second edition (Oxford, 1962), p.45
2. Ibid, p.48
3. Ibid, pp.60-61
4. Ibid, p.65
5. Ibid, p.79
6. Ludwig Choulant, *History and Bibliography of Anatomic Illustration*, translated by Mortimer Frank including a historical essay by Charles Singer (New York and London, 1963), Singer's essay p.21-D
7. Singer and Underwood, p.80
8. Choulant, Singer's essay, p.21-D
9. Ibid, Singer's essay, p.21-D
10. Ibid, Singer's essay, p.21-E. The sheet can be dated c1300
11. William Brockbank, 'Old Anatomical Theatres and What Took Place Therein' *Med. Hist.* 12 (1968) pp.371-384, p.378
12. Choulant, Singer's essay, p.21-F
13. W. S. C. Copeman, 'The Evolution of Anatomy and Surgery Under the Tudors' *Annals of Royal College of Surgeons* 32 (1964) pp.1-21, p.1
14. Choulant, pp.89-90. The quotation in l. is from Mundinus' *Anatomia*:  
quia primo illa membra fetida sunt et ideo ut primitus abiciantur ab eis  
incipiendum est.
15. J. B. de C. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley, *The Illustrations from the works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels*, (Cleveland and New York, 1950), p.23
16. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, History of Science Society Publications, New Series IV, (New York, 1941), Volume V, Chapter XXIII, 'Anatomy from Carpi to Vesalius' pp.498-531, p.517
17. Choulant, Singer's essay, p.21-J
18. Ibid, Singer's essay, p.21-J
19. Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, (Berengarius), *Isagogae Breves (A Short Introduction to Anatomy)*, translated with an introduction and historical notes by L. R. Lind and anatomical notes by Paul G. Roope (Chicago, 1959), Introduction p.10
20. Ibid, p.7
21. Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, edited and abridged by Charles Hope and Alessandro Nova, from the translation by John Addington Symonds (Oxford, 1983), p.32-34
22. Ibid, p.120
23. Berengarius, *Isagogae Breves*, p.10. Quoting from Berengarius, *Commentary on the Anatomy of Mundinus* fol.4
24. M. H. Spielmann, *The Iconography of Andreas Vesalius* Research Studies in Medical History No. 3, Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, (London, 1925), Note to p. xiv and Saunders, p.39

25. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), Part I, section 1, p.23. He is describing Vesalius dissecting the arteries.
26. Singer and Underwood, p.88
27. Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, translated by George Bull from Vasari's second edition published in 1568 (Harmondsworth, 1965), pp.316-317. Choulant lists several of Raphael's sketches (p.109)
28. Many of the drawings (there are over 750 separate anatomical sketches altogether) are now in the royal collections at Windsor Castle. A selection is published in *Leonardo da Vinci: Anatomical Drawings*, text by Dr. Jean Mathé, translated by David Macrae, (Fribourg, 1978)
29. Choulant, p.33
30. Ibid, p.106
31. William S. Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp - An Iconological Study* (New York, 1958), p.11-14. One from Leipzig, published in 1646 announcing a public anatomy and another issued in Berne, 18 December 1660 advertising an anatomy 'not out of a desire to vent malice upon the work of God but so that you may come to know yourself'.
32. John Banister, *The Historie of Man, sucked from the sappe of the most approved Anathomistes, in this present age, compiled in most compendious fourme, and new published in English, from the utilitie of all godly Chirurgians within this Realme, by Iohn Banister, master in Chirurgerie, and Practitioner in Phisicke*, (London, 1578), Proeme, sig.B2<sup>r</sup>
33. Francis Joseph Cole, *A History of Comparative Anatomy from Aristotle to the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1944), p.46
34. Saunders and O'Malley, p.16
35. Singer and Underwood, pp.242-243
36. Baldasar Heseler, *Andreas Vesalius' First Public Anatomy at Bologna 1540 - an eyewitness account*, translated from the Latin by Ruben Eriksson with an introduction and notes (Uppsala, 1959), Introduction p.41
37. Ibid, p.17
38. Ibid, 28<sup>th</sup> January, evening, 26<sup>th</sup> and last Demonstration, pp.291,293
39. Ibid, 13<sup>th</sup> January, morning, 1<sup>st</sup> Lecture, p.45
40. Ibid, 19<sup>th</sup> January, evening, 9<sup>th</sup> Demonstration, p.165
41. Ibid, 26<sup>th</sup> January, evening, 22<sup>nd</sup> Demonstration, p.273
42. Ibid, 15<sup>th</sup> January, morning, 5<sup>th</sup> Lecture, p.85
43. Ibid, 19<sup>th</sup> January, morning, 12<sup>th</sup> Lecture, p.157
44. Ibid, 21<sup>st</sup> January, afternoon, 17<sup>th</sup> Lecture, p.201
45. Ibid, 27<sup>th</sup> January, morning, 25<sup>th</sup> Lecture, p.281
46. Saunders and O'Malley, p.31.
47. Sir George Clark, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of London* (Oxford, 1964), Volume I, pp.9-10
48. R. Jacobi, *A Kalender, or Table, comprehending the effect of all the Statutes that have been made and in print, beginning with Magna Charta, enacted Anno 9, H3 and proceeding one by one, untill the end of the session of Parliament holden Anno 3*, (London, 1606), p.393
49. John Camp, *100 Years of Medical Murder* (London, 1983), p.41

50. Irving I. Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry* (London, 1971), p.109
51. Camp, p.41.
52. John Flint South, *Memorials of the Craft of Surgery in England*, edited by D'Arcy Power with an introduction by Sir James Paget and a preface by the editor (London, 1886), p.85, quoting from the petition raised against the 1511 Act.
53. Jacobi, *Kalender*, p.393
54. Clark,, p.13
55. Sidney Young, *The Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* compiled from their records and other sources with illustrations by Austin T. Young (London, 1890), Appendix C, p.588
56. David Edwardes, *Introduction to Anatomy 1532*, edited by C. D. O'Malley and K. F. Russell (London, 1961), Introductory essay, p.13-14. One of the clauses of the charter states:  
 ... and that we may have anis [once] in the yeir ane condampnit man efter he be deid to mak antonell of, quhairthraw we may haif experience, ilk ane to instruct vtheris ... and that na barbour, waister nor seruand, within this burgh hantt [practise] vse nor exerce the craft of Surregenrie without he be expert and know perfytelie the thingis abouewritten.
57. South, p.93. Samuel Pepys considered buying the painting, but finally decided not to, considering it too badly fire-damaged (*Diary*, edited by Latham and Matthews, 29 August, 1668, p.293)
58. Edwardes, Introductory essay, p.16. The quote comes from *De Libris Propriis* p.90 in *The Works of John Caius, MD* edited by Venn, (Cambridge, 1912)
59. Ibid, p.24
60. Ibid, Note 43 to p.17, quoting from *Annales a Collegio Condito* pp. 53-4 in *The Works of John Caius, MD*
61. Choulant, Singer's essay, p. 21-F. He notes that Michele Medici in *Compendio storico della scuola anatomica di Bologna*, (Bologna, 1857), p.12 records a case in 1319
62. Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles* (London, 1587) Vol. III, part ii, for the year 1582, p.1349
63. South, p.381
64. Ibid, p.134
65. Ibid, pp.134-135
66. Ibid, p.135
67. Ibid, p.185
68. K. F. Russell, *British Anatomy 1525-1800: A Bibliography* (Melbourne, 1963), p.5
69. Edwardes, Translation of text, p.59
70. Ibid, Introductory essay, p.23
71. Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 364 table 1
72. Lists of surviving broad-sheets can be found in both Russell and Choulant
73. Heckscher, Appendix II A, a translation of *Historia corporis humani* by Alexander Benedictus (Alessandro Benedetti), pp.182-183
74. Singer, *The Evolution of Anatomy* (London, 1925), p.153

75. Brockbank, p.374. This is one of the few anatomy theatres still extant. Windows were added in 1848 and it was in use until 1872 when anatomical teaching was transferred elsewhere. Bologna is another, but had to be rebuilt in facsimile after bombing in the second world war.
76. Ibid, p.374. Brockbank also mentions the first row in the theatre as being reserved for 'Professors of Anatomy, the Rectors of the City and of the University, the Councillors and members of the Medical College and representatives of *the Venetian nobility*' (p.374) (my italics). This together with Fabricius' mention in the Golden Book, the *Libro d'Oro*, Venice's register of nobility, is evidence of Padua's strong links with Venice, cf also Chapter 4, n.46
77. Ibid, p.375
78. Ibid, pp.375-376
79. South, p.142
80. Brockbank, p.380
81. Ibid, p.381
82. Ibid, p.376
83. Ibid, pp.382-383

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