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Cover Page Footnote

The author would like to thank his family for all of their insights provided while they struggle to read Shakespeare over breakfast and in particular his wife Brenda, who persistently and lovingly oversees that whole process. In addition, he would like to thank Paula Heider for technical support. This article is dedicated to Clark Nicholson, artistic director of the Harrisburg Shakespeare Festival and Popcorn Hat Players, whose uncompromising commitment to wisdom and whose compassionate heart have made him one of the world's leading authorities on William Shakespeare. The author has appreciated the opportunities he has had to be inspired by Mr. Nicholson's insights and occasionally participate in his work.

WHO'S AFRAID OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE?: CONFRONTING OUR CONCEPTS OF JUSTICE AND MERCY IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

Randy Lee*

PROLOGUE

On February 18, 2002, the attorney for Philadelphia Gear Corporation ("PGC") finished his amended complaint in *Philadelphia Gear Corporation v. Swath International, Ltd.*¹ The attorney had prepared this amended complaint in response to the court's dismissal of the original complaint without prejudice and with leave to amend.² The attorney had informed opposing counsel that he "would be filing an amended complaint in accordance with the Court's Memorandum and Order."³

The next morning, the attorney's secretary mistakenly retrieved the old complaint instead of the new one, "changed its title to 'First Amended Complaint,' and added the date and a certificate of service."⁴ In doing so, the secretary set in motion a drama that would ultimately challenge the notions of justice that circulate throughout the American legal system.

Without rereading the complaint now on his desk, the attorney signed it and filed it with the court.⁵ The attorney for Swath International, Ltd. ("Swath") received his copy of the complaint, recognized that "the substantive allegations had not changed,"⁶ and moved to dismiss the complaint.⁷ When the attorney for PGC received the motion and, consequently, recognized his own mistake, he immediately sent an email to the Swath attorney, an email which humbly and "sheepishly" apologized for his mistake and requested that Swath stipulate to allow PGC to file a second amended complaint.⁸ Swath's attorney indicated that Swath would agree to the filing of such an amended complaint but only if PGC paid "Swath

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¹ 200 F. Supp. 2d 493, 495 (E.D. Pa. 2002).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.* at 497.

⁷ *Id.* at 495.

⁸ *Id.* at 495-496.

\$12,750, the fees allegedly incurred in responding to the First Amended Complaint.”⁹ PGC’s attorney refused to pay and instead filed a motion for leave to file a second amended complaint.¹⁰

In response to this motion, Judge Bruce W. Kauffman acknowledged there was “no excuse for [the PGC attorney’s] admitted failure to read the First Amended Complaint carefully before signing it and causing it to be filed.”¹¹ In spite of that acknowledgment, Judge Kauffman ultimately decided to allow PGC to file the Second Amended Complaint and denied to Swath attorneys’ fees.¹²

In so doing, Judge Kauffman reasoned that he presided within “an enlightened and effective system of justice,” and that justice required an adherence to standards of civility.¹³ Judge Kauffman observed that “a simple telephone call [by Swath’s attorney] to counsel for PGC would have disclosed the error, avoided the motion to dismiss Count III presently pending before the Court and eliminated the need for PGC to request leave to file a second amended pleading.”¹⁴ Thus, from Judge Kauffman’s perspective, the whole controversy “could have been entirely avoided with the exercise of the slightest bit of civility,” and, therefore, “the conduct of Swath’s counsel was unnecessarily harsh under all the circumstances and should also be discouraged.”¹⁵

Although Judge Kauffman denied attorneys’ fees to Swath, he indicated that the civility he required of Swath’s attorneys would ultimately serve as its own reward. In Judge Kauffman’s experience, “lawyers who treat other lawyers with civility can expect the same when they inevitably find themselves in similar situations. In the long run, such behavior not only is totally consistent with zealous advocacy, but also inexorably promotes the interests of justice.”¹⁶ Having concluded Judge Kauffman’s opinion, one is left to wonder whether, in fact, the civility reflected in the suggested phone call truly would “inexorably promote[] the interests of justice.”¹⁷ Most certainly, the answer to that question depends on how one defines *justice*. From one perspective, PGC’s counsel made a mistake—Should he not bear the consequences of that mistake? Does justice not require that PGC’s counsel get what he deserves? From a second perspective, Swath’s counsel found itself in a position of strength, PGC’s counsel not wanting, “for obvious reasons,” to have to explain the erroneously filed pleading and

⁹ *Id.* at 496. The court noted that this amount appeared “excessive.” *Id.* at 497 n. 2.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 496.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.* at 498.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.* at 497 (quoting Mem. Supp. Mot. Leave File Second Am. Compl. at 4-5).

¹⁵ *Id.* at 498.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

cross-move for leave to file a second amended complaint.¹⁸ In such a context, would justice deny Swath's counsel the right to press that advantage and aggressively pursue what Swath wants? Finally, Judge Kauffman assured that "lawyers who treat other lawyers with civility can expect the same," but in a world noted for power and aggression—Can one truly count on kindnesses being returned? Can justice really expect one to extend his hand and make himself or even his client vulnerable in exchange for a promise of some future reward?¹⁹

In the end, having concluded Judge Kauffman's opinion, one is left to wonder whether the opinion truly answers our question about what "promotes the interests of justice," or whether the opinion, instead, confronts us with the fuller reality of the question itself—Is justice getting what we deserve, or is it getting what we want, or does justice demand that we make ourselves vulnerable with no guarantee of ultimate reward?²⁰

I. INTRODUCTION

Were one to encounter a just world, what would such a world be like? Would it be a place where everyone got what they wanted, or would it be a place where everyone got what they deserved? Or perhaps could it be a place where at least some venture forth on faith and "give and hazard all" they have on appearances that promise nothing and yet yield treasures greater than anything we could ever want or merit?²¹

In *The Merchant of Venice*, William Shakespeare takes his audience to all three such places and leaves them to yearn for a place beyond justice and even beyond mercy—a place that must lie at the crossing of justice and mercy. In doing so, he strips us of our vanities, exposes our hypocrisies, crumbles our social and religious pretensions, and leads us, all the while, to believe he is laughing with us when in reality he is crying for us.

Although *Merchant* is included among Shakespeare's comedies and commentators have been content to meet it as such, that label seems deceiving.²² In its own era, Shakespeare used *Merchant* to bring his audience to the brink of seeing a human heart cut out of its chest centuries before such graphic violence could pass for entertainment.²³ Furthermore, in writing the play, Shakespeare did not balk at showing his audience a man literally stripped of his faith in a public courtroom, mocked, and

¹⁸ *Id.* at 495.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 498.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act 2, sc. 7 [hereinafter *Merchant*].

²² Roma Gill, *Commentary*, in William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* xii, xxvi (Roma Gill 2d ed., Oxford U. Press 2001). The term *comedy* is derived from the Greek *komos*, which means "a revel," and in drama the term "may be broadly defined as whatever makes us laugh." X.J. Kennedy, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* 961 (3d ed. Little, Brown and Co. 1983).

²³ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc. 1.

humiliated.²⁴ In the play, one sees friendship and kindness abused, spouses betrayed, and offspring devalued and disowned.²⁵ Noble women find themselves married off to self-absorbed men, who doubt their wives' honor and cannot appreciate their virtue.²⁶ All of this revolves around a plot driven by the contents of three caskets.²⁷ If this be the stuff of comedy, one must question the author's sense of humor.

In addition to accepting *Merchant* as a comedy, critics have also been willing to consider the play as an anti-Semitic play from an anti-Semitic age.²⁸ A careful reading of the play, however, denies such a view. If Shakespeare set out in *Merchant* to create an anti-Semitic praise of Christian virtue, he chose an odd group of Christian characters to accomplish the task. In the play, his most overt Christians are spiteful, vengeful people whose lives revolve largely around money and power. These characters are ignorant of their own laws and confounded by their own faith. They judge largely on appearances, value words over deeds, and place saving face over behaving honorably. They confuse the plank in their own eye with the speck of sawdust in their brother's,²⁹ and on those rare occasions when they are forced to acknowledge the "quality of mercy," they recognize it only as something for others to extend to them and not something for them to extend to others.³⁰

If *Merchant* is disturbing to Jews, then it should also be disturbing to Christians, and if disturbing to Jews and Christians, then also to husbands, wives, lawyers, and capitalists. Yet, too often, the play is not nearly as disturbing as it ought to be. In fact, part of the haunting power of *Merchant* is that in it some of Shakespeare's most profound lines roll off the lips of characters who seem oblivious to the implications of their own words, and then encounter an audience as naïve to the lines' meanings as are the characters who spoke them.

The purpose of this essay is to encounter *Merchant* not where we are comfortable encountering it, not where it amuses or cheers us, but where Shakespeare intended it to disquiet us; there the play challenges our concepts of justice and mercy. How do we judge, and how does judgment relate to justice? Is justice getting what one deserves, getting what one wants, or even getting back at those who have wronged us? How do the just use power, and must power be tempered by mercy? Is mercy simply the failure to press an advantage? Is the quality of mercy a sign of weakness? Does mercy depend on love, forgiveness, redemption, excuses, or self-

²⁴*Id.*

²⁵See *infra* text accompanying nn. 62-146.

²⁶*Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 5, sc.1.

²⁷*Id.* at act 1, sc. 2.

²⁸Ann Barton, *The Merchant of Venice*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* 250, 250-51 (G. Blakemore Evans ed., Houghton Mifflin Co. 1974).

²⁹*Matthew* 7:3.

³⁰*Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc.1.

justification? Does mercy depend on justice, and do both mercy and justice depend on a willingness to confront truth?

Communities are joined as much by the questions "they think important as the answer they think correct."³¹ It is, furthermore, not simply the questions the community considers important but the vitality with which the community seeks to answer those questions that measures the merit of the community.³² In that light, Shakespeare was content in *Merchant* to offer in a real and honest way the questions that he felt his community needed to think important. He left it to the community to seek the answers to those questions. Similarly, this essay also will not attempt to answer those questions. Rather, it will content itself with resurrecting Shakespeare's questions for a new generation, who hopefully will embrace them as no less than "the largest questions about human life and human purpose."³³

II. THE STATEMENT OF THE CASE: *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

In *Merchant*, William Shakespeare takes two unrelated stories and masterfully weaves them into one seamless tale. Yet, for all that artistry, the play is driven not so much by plot but by settings and characters. Thus, to understand *Merchant* and its two plots, one must first become familiar with the two settings for the play and the characters who populate them.

For one setting Shakespeare chose the real city of Venice; for the other he created the imaginary Belmont. Shakespeare's Venice is a city in pursuit of money³⁴ and ordered by law.³⁵ In the imaginary Belmont, on the other hand, it is love that is pursued³⁶ and mercy, rather than justice, orders the day.³⁷ Other differences further distinguish these two settings. In Belmont, substance is valued over appearance,³⁸ deed is valued over word,³⁹ and integrity means more than just saving face.⁴⁰ In Venice the opposite of each of those is true.⁴¹ Despite their profound differences, however, both in Venice and in Belmont, people must come to grips with a core question—

³¹ H. Jefferson Powell, *The Moral Tradition of American Constitutionalism* 30 (Duke U. Press 1993).

³² *Id.* at 28; see also Randy Lee, *Reflections on a Rose in its Sixth Season: A Review of H. Jefferson Powell's The Moral Tradition of American Constitutionalism*, 32 Creighton L. Rev. 1205, 1219-26 (1999).

³³ Thomas L. Shaffer et al., *H. Jefferson Powell on the American Constitutional Tradition: A Conversation*, 72 Notre Dame L. Rev. 11, 15 (1996).

³⁴ See e.g. *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 3 (Bassanio, Antonio, and Shylock making their financial arrangement).

³⁵ See e.g. *id.* at act 4, sc. 1 ("there is no power in Venice [c]an alter a decree established").

³⁶ See e.g. *id.* at act 1, sc. 2 (Portia and Nerissa discussing the state of Portia's matrimonial opportunities).

³⁷ See e.g. *id.* at act 5, sc. 1 (Portia and Nerissa forgive their husbands and bring Antonio good news.).

³⁸ See e.g. *id.* (Nerissa criticizing Gratiano for taking so lightly his oath to her).

³⁹ See e.g. *id.* (Portia indicating her feelings toward Antonio "must appear in other ways than words").

⁴⁰ See e.g. *id.* (Portia reprimanding Bassanio for breaking an oath merely to protect his "honour" from being "besmeared").

⁴¹ See e.g. *id.* at act 4, sc. 3 (Bassanio breaking an oath to his wife and the forced conversion of Shylock).

Whether people should get what they “desire,” get what they “deserve,” or “give and hazard all [they] hath”?⁴²

Of all the play's characters struggling to address this question, Shylock the Jewish money lender is the most famous and the most complex. Throughout the play, Shylock demands a justice that yields to all men that which they deserve, but he lacks the self-awareness to anticipate what such a justice would have in store for him. Thus, Shylock is angry when his daughter leaves him; yet, her departure is the inevitable consequence of Shylock's own greed: she simply can no longer live with a father whose love for gold, like that of King Midas, leaves him incapable of touching his only daughter.⁴³ Similarly, Shylock is dashed and bewildered when he finds himself stripped of wealth, faith, and face in open court; yet, for the audience, this is merely the equally inevitable consequence of Shylock's demanding the execution of another human being.⁴⁴ Although it would appear that the extension of mercy would frequently benefit Shylock, mercy is a trait Shylock disdains, both as a sign of weakness⁴⁵ and a betrayal of his race.⁴⁶

Despite his greed and harshness, Shylock can evoke sympathy. Certainly he hates the play's Christians, but those Christians have kicked him in the streets of Venice, called him “misbeliever,” and “cut-throat dog,” berated him, and spit upon his coat and beard.⁴⁷ They have “laughed at [Shylock's] losses, mocked [his] gains, scorned [his] nation, thwarted [his] bargains, cooled [his] friends, [and] heated [his] enemies.”⁴⁸ In light of such treatment, Shylock maintains that he is but a product of his Christian world. “The villainy you teach me,” Shylock says, “I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.”⁴⁹ Yet, even in this, Shylock gives one reason to hesitate to be completely sympathetic. While he is quick to suggest that the issue between him and his Christian antagonists is one of faith, the focus of these disputes always seems to depart from the theological to arrive at the financial and Shylock's desire to gain wealth by loaning money for interest.⁵⁰ Thus, one is left to wonder if Venice's religious divides are merely a pretext to lend credibility to the battles for wealth and

⁴² *Id.* at act 2, sc. 7.

⁴³ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 3.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1.

⁴⁵ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 3 (Shylock saying, “I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool, [t]o shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield [t]o Christian intercessors.”).

⁴⁶ *Id.* at act 1, sc. 3 (Shylock saying of showing mercy to Antonio, “[c]urs'd be my tribe [i]f I forgive him!”).

⁴⁷ *Id.* at act 1, sc. 3.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 1.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ See e.g. *id.* (Shylock lamenting that Antonio has both “scorned my nation” and “thwarted my bargains”).

power that float the city.⁵¹

Ironically, it is as Shylock makes one of his most vigorous arguments to justify Jewish revenge and violence that Shakespeare makes one of his most poignant appeals for Christian mercy toward Jews:

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?⁵²

Shylock's final question in this series—"If you poison us, do we not die?"—functions most certainly as a climax to Shylock's appeal for the recognition of the humanity of Jews.⁵³ Yet, the question also serves as a transition into Shylock's defense of his own thirst for vengeance and, then, ultimately a testimony on the state of Shylock's own soul. Shylock follows this question by instructing,

[a]nd 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.⁵⁴

Thus, this plea for compassion, this call for Shylock's Christian "neighbors"⁵⁵ to understand that the pain that they can feel he can feel also, becomes a warning that as Shylock has been treated, he will treat others.⁵⁶ The justice and mercy Shylock has been taught "by Christian example" will be the justice and mercy he "will execute."⁵⁷

As the plot further unfolds, it becomes clear that in the mind of Shylock, the poison Shylock's Venecians have shown him has become the poison that has killed Shylock's capacity to love. His own soul having been destroyed, Shylock has no reservations about seeking even the death of

⁵¹ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 3 (Antonio indicating that even law condemning him must be obeyed rather than have Venice's international commerce placed at risk).

⁵² *Id.* at act 3, sc. 1.

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 1.

⁵⁵ *Luke* 10:36-37 (Jesus asking a lawyer which of three men "was neighbor to the robber's victim?" the lawyer responding, "The one who treated him with mercy," and Jesus instructing, "Go and do likewise."

⁵⁶ *Matthew* 7:12 ("Do to others what you would have them do to you.").

⁵⁷ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 3, sc. 1.

another. There is a suggestion in all this that Shylock hates his fellow Venecians for what he feels they have made him, and by allowing himself to become even less, he feels he can be justified in hating them even more. If this is the case, then Shylock has become trapped within the lies that a person can be lost beyond redemption and that other people can be accountable for the state of one's own soul. In any event, one is left to understand Shylock as a character who believes people should get what they deserve even as he should hope they do not.⁵⁸

Among the Christian characters who must come to grips with the answer to the core question of what justice requires, Bassanio moves most fluidly through the two plot lines, cavalierly seeking all that he desires. He admits to being a "prodigal,"⁵⁹ having squandered not only his own wealth but that of his closest friends.⁶⁰ So financially irresponsible that no one would lend him money on his own account, Bassanio seeks to have his friends borrow for him on their account, with Bassanio oblivious to their own feelings or circumstances. He sees marrying for money as the answer to his financial problems and lavish desires.⁶¹ Furthermore, Bassanio is as indiscreet with his words and promises as he is with his money.⁶²

In Bassanio, however, the world again gets what it has created, and the character has a particular insight into the workings of the world. Bassanio's friends facilitate and revel in his reckless behavior.⁶³ He is all show and counts on the world to be "deceiv'd with ornament," and the world seldom disappoints him.⁶⁴ In fact, stripped of his ornamentation, Bassanio might well resemble his friend Gratiano, a character who distinguishes himself with his coarseness, recklessness, and insensitivity. Unlike Shylock, Bassanio knows himself well enough not to want what he deserves. Instead he is willing to "give and hazard all,"⁶⁵ even when others would not be, as he pursues all that he desires.⁶⁶

Like Bassanio, Portia is another Christian character who hopes to receive what she desires; yet, the similarities between the two end there. While Bassanio personifies the materialism and shallowness of Venice, its empty words and hollow appearances, Portia personifies much of what is

⁵⁸ See 20: *The Countdown Magazine*, "Remembers Rich Mullins: Conclusion" (Communion Commun. Oct. 12, 1997) (Radio broad., transcr. available at <http://www.kidbrothers.net/rmml/rmml189.html>) ("Someday God will destroy injustice. Someday there will be a judgment and because we have a loving and forgiving Father, maybe we'll survive it. If we don't, sometimes I think hell is better than what we deserve anyway.").

⁵⁹ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 1.

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² See e.g. *id.* at act 4, sc. 1.

⁶³ See e.g. *id.* at act 1, sc. 1.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 2.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 7.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 2.

good in Belmont.⁶⁷ She is wise and still obedient, compassionate, generous, gentle, hopeful, and forgiving. She seeks mercy for all, and she grants to each the chance to be merciful and the opportunity to be redeemed. However, if Portia has strengths to parallel Bassanio's weaknesses, his strength also marks Portia's greatest weakness: in spite of her wisdom and better judgment, Portia can place too much faith in appearances.

Unlike Portia and Bassanio, the Christian Antonio, a successful merchant of Venice, has resigned himself to not getting what he wants.⁶⁸ He describes life as "[a] stage where every man must play a part, [a]nd mine a sad one."⁶⁹ Yet, even Antonio is at a loss to identify the source of his sadness or what he might desire.⁷⁰ He "hold[s] the world but as the world," fears not for his wealth, and is not disappointed in love.⁷¹ Thus, Antonio is left to wonder of his melancholy "how I caught it, found it, or came by it, [w]hat stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born."⁷²

Although Antonio finds little comfort in his wealth, he is not immune to the hold wealth has on Venice. Antonio would rather give his life as collateral on a loan than pay interest on that loan⁷³ and considers Fortune kind when it takes a man's life rather than "let the wretched man outlive his wealth, [t]o view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow [a]n age of poverty."⁷⁴

Without any particular desire, Antonio is disposed to *give and hazard all* in a dramatic fashion and to accept passively whatever comes as a result. Thus, Antonio would give his life for his friend Bassanio without question or regret,⁷⁵ and also serve as Shylock's harshest persecutor in all of Venice.⁷⁶

Jessica and Lorenzo represent the final two characters requiring immediate attention. Jessica is the Jewish daughter of Shylock, and Lorenzo is her Christian husband. Shakespeare describes Jessica as "wise, fair, and true," and Lorenzo loves and respects her for all these traits.⁷⁷ Though

⁶⁷ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 14-22.

⁶⁸ See e.g. *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 2 (Portia capturing national stereotypes in her evaluations of suitors and remembering Bassanio as "worthy of thy praise"); *id.* at act 2, sc. 7 (Portia expressing her hope that none of the Moor's complexion pass the test to be her spouse).

⁶⁹ *Id.* at act 1, sc. 1.

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ *Id.* at act 1, sc. 3 (Antonio describing Shylock as growing "kind" because he asks for a pound of flesh as surety on his loan to Antonio rather than charging Antonio interest on the loan).

⁷⁴ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1 (Antonio saying "Fortune shows herself more kind [t]han is her custom: it is still her use [t]o let the wretched man outlive his wealth.").

⁷⁵ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1 (Antonio telling Bassanio that he "repents not that he pays [Bassanio's] debt" with his life).

⁷⁶ *Id.* at act 1, sc. 3.

⁷⁷ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 6.

Jessica converts to Christianity,⁷⁸ Lorenzo also shows an appreciation of Jewish teachings uncommon among his Christian peers.⁷⁹ Healthy as their relationship is, the couple have no idealized notion of it, and they frequently, playfully banter back and forth about one another's limitations.⁸⁰ Thus, Jessica and Lorenzo love another because they can truly see one another and still see beyond.⁸¹

In marrying, Jessica and Lorenzo grab at what they want and yet, they must do so by giving and hazarding all. To escape Shylock's disapproval, the couple must elope and then flee Venice.⁸² Jessica finances their flight on money and jewels she takes from her father and the two take refuge in Belmont, the land where mercy reigns.⁸³

In Jessica, Shakespeare created an implicit prodigal daughter to contrast to his explicit prodigal son, Bassanio.⁸⁴ In the Biblical parable of the prodigal son, a wasteful son demanded his share of his loving father's wealth and then left home to squander that share in decadence, engaging in a lifestyle he felt he could not embrace in his father's house.⁸⁵ Once that wealth was gone, the prodigal son was left to fend with the pigs for food, and in that destitute state, he decided that he would return to his father, ask his forgiveness, and beg to be allowed to act as a servant in his father's house.⁸⁶ As the son approached his father's house, the father saw the son still far off, ran to him, and embraced him, not as a servant but as a son.⁸⁷

The similarity between Bassanio and the reckless, wasteful son are obvious while those between that son and Jessica are more subtle and present more as a mirror image. Rather than the reckless son of a loving father, Jessica is the good daughter of a cold and harsh father. While the good father in the parable gives willingly to the reckless son, Shakespeare's good daughter must steal from the harsh father. And while the good father patiently watches down the road hoping for the return of one he can embrace once more as a son, the harsh father sends out his spies to stalk the good daughter and bring her back so he can punish her as a thief.⁸⁸ For the good

⁷⁸ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 5 (Jessica acknowledging her "husband . . . hath made [her] a Christian").

⁷⁹ *Id.* at act 5, sc. 1 (Lorenzo describing kindness as God's gift of manna to the Jewish people). See *Exodus* 16:4.

⁸⁰ See e.g. *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 3, sc. 5; act 5, sc. 1.

⁸¹ Such a vision of love is articulated in the song *Everyman* describing God's love as "love that is not blind; it can look at who we are and still see beyond." Rich Mullins, *Everyman*, in *the World as Best as I Can Remember It*, vol. 2 (Reunion Records 1992) (CD) (lyrics published at <http://kidbrothers.net/music/lyrics/wabairi2-e.html>).

⁸² *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21 at act 2, sc. 6.

⁸³ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 5.

⁸⁴ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 59-60.

⁸⁵ *Luke* 15:11-14.

⁸⁶ *Id.* at 15:15-20.

⁸⁷ *Id.* at 15:21-32.

⁸⁸ For this view of the father in the parable see Rich Mullins, *Growing Young*, in *the World as Best as I Can Remember It*, vol. 2 (Reunion Records 1992)(CD)(lyrics published at <http://kidbrothers.net/music/lyrics/wabairi2-gy.html>).

father, no wealth could be worth more than his child. For the harsh father, no child could be worth more than his wealth. Ultimately, the prodigal son can find peace only in the arms of a father who is both righteous and merciful. Ultimately, the good daughter can find peace only in a place governed by the righteousness and mercy her father could never show.⁸⁹

Having considered *Merchant's* settings and characters, one can now turn to the play's plot. The two folktales from which emerges *Merchant* are the "story of the savage creditor who tries but fails to obtain a pound of human flesh as payment of a debt" and the story "of the lover who gains his lady because he chooses the right casket among three in a riddle game."⁹⁰ As the play opens, one sees how the tales are to be joined. In Belmont, the fair and virtuous Portia is entertaining the throng of suitors who have come to win her hand by solving the riddle that her late father devised to determine who could wed his only daughter, a riddle requiring the suitor to choose rightly from among three caskets.⁹¹ In Venice, meanwhile, the carefree Bassanio is asking his friend the melancholy Antonio to lend him sufficient money that he too can go to Belmont, present himself as a wealthy gentleman, and win the hand of the virtuous Portia, whose wealth can allow Bassanio to pay off his debts and regain his own fortune.⁹² Antonio, who would hold nothing back from Bassanio, has no money to give him because Antonio's own fortune is tied up in the voyages of several trading ships.⁹³ Given that Bassanio's own reputation for financial responsibility prevents him from borrowing any more money himself, Antonio invites Bassanio to search Venice for someone who will lend Bassanio money on Antonio's credit.⁹⁴

With Antonio's fortunes so much at risk, Bassanio finds that it is only Shylock who will loan him money on Antonio's account.⁹⁵ Shylock is Antonio's bitterest enemy and lends money only with interest, a practice Antonio finds morally repugnant; yet, none of this deters Bassanio from sending for Antonio so the three of them can seal the bargain.⁹⁶ When Antonio arrives, he learns that the hated Shylock plans to extend this "kindness."⁹⁷ Rather than interest, Shylock will require only that if the debt be not repaid on time, he may take a pound of Antonio's "fair flesh, to be cut off and taken [i]n what part of [Antonio's] body pleaseth [Shylock]."⁹⁸ Antonio embraces this offer because he is certain his ships will have

⁸⁹ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 5, sc. 1 (Jessica and Lorenzo finding peace in Belmont).

⁹⁰ Barton, *supra* n. 28, at 250.

⁹¹ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 2.

⁹² *Id.* at act 1, sc. 1.

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Id.*

⁹⁵ *Id.* at act 1, sc. 3.

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

⁹⁸ *Id.*

returned well in advance of the debt's due date and because the offer allows him to avoid paying interest.⁹⁹

With money in hand, Bassanio is off to Belmont to win Portia.¹⁰⁰ He instructs his friend Gratiano, who is to accompany him, that Gratiano must hide his "wild behaviour," lest he undermine Bassanio's efforts to paint a good picture for Portia.¹⁰¹ Gratiano assures Bassanio that he will put on all manners of false reverence to deceive Portia.¹⁰²

In Belmont, Portia indeed falls in love with Bassanio, and her handmaid Nerissa falls in love with Gratiano.¹⁰³ Still there remains the matter of the riddle. Portia longs to spend time with Bassanio and fears he will answer the riddle incorrectly. Thus, she begs Bassanio to "pause a day or two" before he attempts to answer the riddle.¹⁰⁴ Bassanio insists on attempting immediately, and Portia begins to suspect that Bassanio's motives may not be purely romantic.¹⁰⁵ When she presses him, Bassanio continues to deceive her and fails to mention either his debt to Antonio or his need to gain access to Portia's fortune.¹⁰⁶

Bassanio is led to the three caskets and reminded that if he chooses wrongly, he must immediately leave Belmont, never disclose to anyone the casket he chose, and never again "woo a maid in way of marriage."¹⁰⁷ Before him are caskets of gold, silver, and lead.¹⁰⁸ The gold one bears the inscription, "Who chooseth me, shall gain what many men desire"; the silver bears the inscription, "Who chooseth me, shall get as much as he deserves"; and the lead, "Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath."¹⁰⁹ As a man of appearances himself, Bassanio is not one to be deceived by them. He passes over the gold and silver caskets because "ornament is but the guiled shore [t]o a most dangerous sea" and "[t]he seeming truth which cunning times put on [t]o entrap the wisest."¹¹⁰ Instead, he chooses the lead casket and inside finds the pronouncement, "You that choose not by the view [c]hance as fair, and choose as true."¹¹¹ Portia makes Bassanio the master over all she is and has, but ironically does so in romantic terms framed in the financial language of "account," "sum[s]," numbers, and arithmetic.¹¹² She also gives him a ring, which he must wear always

⁹⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 2.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 9.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 7.

¹¹⁰ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 2.

¹¹¹ *Id.*

¹¹² *Id.*

because its removal will “presage the ruin of [their] love” and be reason for her to denounce him.¹¹³ Bassanio promises her that only death will remove the ring from his finger.¹¹⁴

Nerissa and Gratiano now announce their own intent to marry, but before the couples have time for celebration Jessica and Lorenzo bring news from Venice: Antonio has learned that all his ships are lost, he is now penniless, and his debt to Shylock is forfeit.¹¹⁵ Shylock is so eager for his pound of flesh that he claims that he will refuse even twenty times the debt to renounce his claim.¹¹⁶ At this, Bassanio confesses everything to Portia, and in response, she assures Bassanio that he may use her wealth to pay whatever it takes to satisfy the debt.¹¹⁷ Even before the couples have had time to be wed, Portia sends Bassanio and Gratiano to save their friend.¹¹⁸

Bassanio returns to Venice in time to see the trial of Antonio. Although Antonio has resigned himself to death under the terms of the contract, others plead to Shylock on Antonio's behalf.¹¹⁹ Although all are convinced that the law is in Shylock's favor, the Christians of Venice appeal vainly for Shylock to show mercy.¹²⁰ Shylock, however, silences them by pointing out his treatment of Antonio is no different, no more wrong, than the Christians' treatment of their own slaves.¹²¹

At this point, Portia and Nerissa show up disguised as a lawyer and his male clerk.¹²² Portia's approach to the matter is in stark contrast to that of the Venetian Christians.¹²³ Though they have been emphasizing the *differences* between themselves and Shylock, Portia insists that she cannot distinguish “the Jew” and Antonio although Shylock, at least, would have been clearly identifiable both from his appearance and also from his position in the courtroom.¹²⁴ She agrees with these men of Venice that Venetian law applies to the “cause,” but refuses to agree that the tribunal must twist the law or “do a little wrong” in order “[t]o do a great right.”¹²⁵ Portia counters that once men realize that the law may be so manipulated “many an error by the same example [w]ill rush into the state.”¹²⁶

Portia appeals three times to Shylock to seek mercy rather than

¹¹³ *Id.*

¹¹⁴ *Id.*

¹¹⁵ *Id.*

¹¹⁶ *Id.*

¹¹⁷ *Id.*

¹¹⁸ *Id.*

¹¹⁹ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1.

¹²⁰ *Id.*

¹²¹ *Id.*

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ *Id.*

¹²⁴ *Id.* Plaintiffs and defendants traditionally occupy particular seats in a courtroom.

¹²⁵ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc. 1.

¹²⁶ *Id.*

"law."¹²⁷ The first two directly refute misconceptions Shylock has voiced about mercy. First, Portia assures Shylock that mercy is not a sign of weakness as he has noted repeatedly, but a sign of strength, so much so that it is "mightiest in the mightiest."¹²⁸ She then points out that the similarities that Shylock has seen between himself and the Christians prove not the righteousness of both, but the need both have for mercy. As Portia stresses, "in the course of justice, none of us [s]hould see salvation."¹²⁹

Although Portia has refuted both of Shylock's misconceptions, he remains adamant in insisting on Antonios' life. From now on, however, he insists not for justice but for "law" alone.¹³⁰ Portia now makes her final appeal, this time on the economic grounds Shylock should find persuasive: three times the value of the bond have been tendered in court; Shylock should seize that return on his investment.¹³¹ Shylock insists on proceeding to a judgment by the law.¹³² In this tenacious insistence on law over mercy, Shylock comes to resemble the harsh son in the prodigal son parable,¹³³ who refuses to forgive his prodigal but repentant brother, much as Jessica and Bassanio resembled the prodigal son himself.¹³⁴

Portia now tells Shylock that as he has urged "justice, be assur'd [t]hou shalt have justice more than though desirest."¹³⁵ In all the courtroom, only Portia has understood the law and the contract. It allows Shylock to take a pound of flesh but "no jot of blood."¹³⁶ In fact, should Shylock "shed [o]ne drop of Christian blood" in exacting his pound of flesh, his "lands and goods [will be] by the laws of Venice confiscate [u]nto the state of Venice."¹³⁷ Confronted with the law, Shylock realizes that under the law he can have neither his pound of flesh nor the return of his principal.¹³⁸ Thus, because Shylock has insisted on pursuing what he wanted and what he felt he deserved, he is left with nothing. Had he listened to Portia's appeals for mercy and given and hazarded all he had with no assurances, he would have ended up with an amount three times his principal.

Yet, even now, Shylock's law is not done with him. Portia points out that because Shylock has sought the life of a citizen of Venice, the law allows Antonio to seize one-half of Shylock's goods and the state to seize

¹²⁷ *Id.*

¹²⁸ *Id.*

¹²⁹ *Id.* See also 20: *The Countdown Magazine*, *supra* n. 58; Psalm 143:2 ("Do not enter into judgment with your servant; before you no living being can be just."); John 8:7 ("Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.").

¹³⁰ *Id.*

¹³¹ *Id.*

¹³² *Id.*

¹³³ Luke 15:25-32 (harsh son criticizing his father for extending mercy to the harsh son's prodigal brother and for apparently failing to treat the two brothers as they deserved).

¹³⁴ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 84-87.

¹³⁵ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc. 1.

¹³⁶ *Id.*

¹³⁷ *Id.*

¹³⁸ *Id.*

the other. In addition, Shylock's life must "lie[] in the mercy [o]f the duke only."¹³⁹

Now Portia invites the Christians to show Shylock mercy, and the mercy they extend is to reduce the state's interest in one-half of Shylock's possessions to a fine, to create a trust for Lorenzo with the other half to be administered by Antonio until Shylock's death, and to spare Shylock's life if he agrees to become a Christian and leave all his possessions upon his death to Lorenzo and Jessica.¹⁴⁰ None of the Venetian Christians seem bothered that this conversion is to be only in appearance, nor are they troubled that Gratiano tells Shylock, his new Christian brother, that Shylock should have been hung "for God's sake," and that he, Gratiano, will serve as Shylock's godfather and guarantee Shylock's Christian upbringing though he would prefer to see Shylock executed.¹⁴¹ Shylock agrees to all, but he must postpone his signing of the documents because he becomes ill and must take his leave of the courtroom.¹⁴²

As this portion of the scene comes to a close, one must recognize three points. First, Portia must have known from the moment she entered the courtroom that under Venetian law it was Shylock and not Antonio whose life was at risk under that law. Second, those entrusted to administer Venetian justice were obviously ignorant of Venetian law. Third, Venetian Christianity contented itself with appearances and furthered itself through threat of force.

During the trial, one additional shadow is also cast. In Rome and Greece, as well as in Elizabethan England, many believed that that affection shared between men transcended even the love a husband had for his wife.¹⁴³ During the trial, Bassanio and Gratiano both tell Antonio that they would rather lose their wives to death than lose Antonio.¹⁴⁴ Shylock condemns this "Christian" view of marriage, and both the disguised Portia and Nerissa indicate that were such a view expressed before the men's wives, the men could expect "little thanks" and "an unquiet house."¹⁴⁵

After the trial, the men's devotion to their marriages continues to be tested. Bassanio indiscriminately offers the disguised Portia some gratification of her choosing. At first, she refuses, again characterizing her feelings to Bassanio in economic terms he might understand.¹⁴⁶ At Bassanio's insistence, however, she chooses for a "remembrance" the ring

¹³⁹ *Id.*

¹⁴⁰ *Id.*

¹⁴¹ *Id.*

¹⁴² *Id.*

¹⁴³ Gill, *supra* n. 22, at xiii.

¹⁴⁴ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc. 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*

¹⁴⁶ *Id.*

she has given him.¹⁴⁷ Bassanio first tries to deflect the request by calling the ring a “trifle” and then acknowledges the vow his wife “made” him take concerning the ring.¹⁴⁸ Portia withdraws, indicating that if Bassanio had given her the ring and explained the situation to his wife, his wife would have forgiven him.¹⁴⁹ Antonio then presses Bassanio not to overvalue this wife’s “commandment” but to yield the ring to Portia to reflect the lawyer’s “deservings” and Bassanio’s love for Antonio.¹⁵⁰ Bassanio has Gratiano go after Portia to give her the ring. When he does so, Nerissa is similarly able to get her ring back from Gratiano.¹⁵¹ Although Bassanio promised Portia in Belmont that no bed would be guilty of his stay until he returned to her,¹⁵² he now tells Antonio that the two of them will celebrate together in Venice before beginning their journey in the morning back to Belmont.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, Portia sends Nerissa to Shylock’s home to obtain from him the necessary signatures¹⁵⁴ and then the two women rush back to Belmont stopping only at various shrines to pray for their marriages.¹⁵⁵

The story’s final action occurs in Belmont. Critics are eager to see this final action as bringing all to happiness, but such is hardly the case.¹⁵⁶ Portia seems melancholy as she returns to Belmont, and nothing that subsequently transpires there would be likely to cheer her. As she arrives, Portia sees a candle shining in the night and likens it to a good deed shining “in a naughty world.”¹⁵⁷ The night to her is “but the daylight sick.”¹⁵⁸ She notes how much the world seems relative, and how much our perceptions of the world are framed or distracted by contexts.¹⁵⁹ Yet, Nerissa offers and Portia agrees that there are realities, “virtue[s],” to be discerned in silence when things are allowed to be perceived above the “cackling” of the world.¹⁶⁰

Bassanio, Gratiano, and Antonio arrive in Belmont and describe to Portia their affection for one another in the legal and economic terms of Venice.¹⁶¹ Portia, however, tells Antonio that affection “must appear in other ways than words” and seeks to “scant this breathing courtesy” and show him welcome in her home.¹⁶²

¹⁴⁷ *Id.*

¹⁴⁸ *Id.*

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*

¹⁵⁰ *Id.*

¹⁵¹ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 2.

¹⁵² *Id.* at act 3, sc. 3.

¹⁵³ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Id.* at act 5, sc. 1.

¹⁵⁶ See e.g. Gill, *supra* n. 22, at xxv.

¹⁵⁷ Merchant, *supra* n. 21, at act 5, sc. 1.

¹⁵⁸ *Id.*

¹⁵⁹ *Id.*

¹⁶⁰ *Id.*

¹⁶¹ *Id.*

¹⁶² *Id.*

On this cue, a dispute breaks out between Nerissa and Gratiano. She has discovered that his actions regarding her ring have not lived up to his words and sacred promises.¹⁶³ Rather than admit his error and ask Nerissa's forgiveness, Gratiano seeks to justify himself. He belittles the value of the ring, trivializes its inscription, "Love me, and leave me not," insists that the recipient was a deserving party, and points out that his behavior differs not from that of Bassanio.¹⁶⁴

His crime having been exposed, Bassanio must decide whether to ask forgiveness or justify himself. Thus, if in the courtroom in Venice, Portia presents Jew and Christian with the challenge of extending mercy, here in the courtyard of Belmont, she and Nerissa have posed to their spouses the challenge of seeking mercy. Though as the learned lawyer in Venice, she forewarned Bassanio that his wife would forgive him for giving away the ring,¹⁶⁵ he too seeks to justify himself claiming that he had to give up the ring and violate his oath or allow "ingratitude [to] [s]o much besmear" his honor.¹⁶⁶ When Bassanio finally asks for forgiveness, it is not for his willful breaking of his oath to Portia but for an "enforced wrong," an offense he was forced to commit through no fault of his own.¹⁶⁷ For retribution, Bassanio offers Portia another promise of faithfulness, but she declines the oath of a "double self[ed]" husband already proven too "liberal" in his words.¹⁶⁸

Antonio now intercedes offering himself once more as surety for Bassanio.¹⁶⁹ As Antonio's actions have proven the quality of his words, Portia gives to him a ring that he may give from her to Bassanio.¹⁷⁰ It is, of course, the disputed ring. Nerissa also produces her ring, and the two women inform their husbands that they "did lie" with the lawyer and his clerk in exchange for the rings.¹⁷¹ Not only do their husbands believe this story in spite of their wives' virtuous reputations, but Gratiano insists this is a fate beneath that which the two men deserve.¹⁷²

Portia now produces three documents. One proves to Bassanio and Gratiano that Portia and Nerissa were the lawyer and his clerk; one, of an origin that Portia will not disclose, informs Antonio that three of his ships "[a]re richly come to harbour suddenly"; and one informs Jessica and

¹⁶³ *Id.*

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

¹⁶⁵ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1.

¹⁶⁶ *Id.* at act 5, sc. 1.

¹⁶⁷ *Id.*

¹⁶⁸ *Id.*

¹⁶⁹ *Id.*

¹⁷⁰ *Id.*

¹⁷¹ *Id.*

¹⁷² *Id.*

Lorenzo that they are to inherit all Shylock possesses upon his death.¹⁷³

Antonio does not press Portia to learn the source of the letter concerning his ships. However, the audience knows of only two places Nerissa and Portia stopped on their way home: the religious shrines at which they prayed and the home of Shylock.¹⁷⁴ Shylock could be the source of this information because, as earlier events have shown, Shylock is known among all the gentlemen of Venice as the city's best source of information about its merchants, he operates a network of spies throughout Europe, and he always has had particularly good information about Antonio.¹⁷⁵

Upon learning the true identities of the lawyer and his clerk, neither Bassanio nor Gratiano think to apologize for their willingness to doubt their wives' fidelity and Gratiano's "gross speech," which has offended Portia.¹⁷⁶ As it is almost morning, Portia invites everyone into the house where Nerissa and Portia promise to "answer all things faithfully."¹⁷⁷ Gratiano remarks that the only question he wants answered is how quickly Nerissa will "go to bed" with him and then promises "while I live I'll fear no other thing [s]o sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring."¹⁷⁸ Thus, the play ends with more "gross speech" from Gratiano and yet one final ornate oath, an oath the audience is left to wonder whether it will be honored any more than all the ornate but ill-conceived oaths that have come before it.

III. QUESTIONS PRESENTED

In *Merchant*, Shakespeare confronts his audience with all the ambiguities that order his world and ours. He presses across the stage conflicting notions of law, judgment, justice, and mercy. By removing these concepts from the distracting and threatening contexts of our own lives, Shakespeare provides his audience with the chance to discern the true form of these realities in the silence that "bestows [their] virtue on [them]."¹⁷⁹

The Venetians of *Merchant* criticize the law for its harsh rigidity and therefore, its inability to allow their friend Antonio to escape the tragic consequences of his agreement.¹⁸⁰ Thus, to them the blind indifference for which Lady Justice prides herself is her greatest flaw.¹⁸¹ Yet, as Portia's application of that law proves, the flaw was never in the Venetians' law but

¹⁷³ *Id.*

¹⁷⁴ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 2; act 5, sc. 1.

¹⁷⁵ *Id.* at act 3, sc. 1.

¹⁷⁶ *Id.* at act 5, sc. 1 (Portia urges Gratiano to "[s]peak not so grossly").

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*

¹⁷⁸ *Id.*

¹⁷⁹ *Id.* See also *supra* text accompanying nn. 159-160. Such a view suggests John Rawls' "The Veil of Ignorance." John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* § 24 (Harvard 1971).

¹⁸⁰ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc. 1.

¹⁸¹ This view of Justice as blind may trace back to the Greek goddess Themis, a Titan who is portrayed as wearing a blindfold. T. Vincent, *Common Law, Answer to Question about Origin of Lady of Justice*, <http://www.commonlaw.com/Justice.html> (accessed Oct. 16, 2006).

in their application of that law.¹⁸² Much to their discredit, the elite of Venetian society were prepared to allow the death of Antonio under their law without actually knowing that law. Antonio is saved only because an alien has taken the time to research Venetian law sufficiently to realize that it did not require Antonio's death.

Twice, characters in the play stress to the Venetians that their law and its consistent application is not their enemy but their friend. The law has given order to their society and predictability to their dealings.¹⁸³ This order and predictability, in turn, have fostered Venice as a commercial center with which even foreigners can feel comfortable dealing, and thus, this order and predictability have made the Venetians wealthy.¹⁸⁴ The flaw then is not in the law itself, but in what people do with the law through their ignorance and arrogance and through their hate and near-sightedness.

The latter two traits exhibit themselves when Portia invites the Venetians to apply their law to Shylock. Because Shylock, an alien, has sought the life of Antonio, a citizen, Shylock's "life lies in the mercy [o]f the duke only."¹⁸⁵ Thus, here the law offers the Venetians the flexibility they longed for when the law held Antonio's fate. The law does not require the Venetians to do anything to Shylock; it merely places the Jew at their mercy. In imploring such mercy to Shylock, the Venetians have told him that the "gentleness," "love," "[f]orgive[ness]," and "pity," which comprise mercy, should lead Shylock not only to spare Antonio's life but even "[f]orgive a moiety of the [loan's] principal" in the face of Antonio's huge losses.¹⁸⁶ Yet, the Venetian mercy in which the law places Shylock differs greatly from the mercy advocated by the Venetians. While the Venetians would have had Shylock respond to Antonio's suffering not only in the two men's dealings with each other but also with respect to Antonio's dealing with the rest of the world,¹⁸⁷ the mercy the Venetians apply to Shylock forces him to abandon his faith to his mocking enemies at the threat of his own death.¹⁸⁸ If the image of the broken and sickened Shylock stripped of the trappings of his Jewishness and tormented by his new Christian brothers marks a failing, then it is not the failing of a law that seeks to be blind to human distinctions but the failing of human hypocrisy.

¹⁸² See *supra* text accompanying nn. 122-142.

¹⁸³ See *supra* text accompanying n. 126.

¹⁸⁴ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 3, sc. 3. ("The duke cannot deny the course of law; [f]or the commodity that strangers have [w]ith us in Venice, if it be denied, [w]ill much impeach the justice of the state, [s]ince that the trade and profit of the city [c]onsisteth of all nations.").

¹⁸⁵ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1.

¹⁸⁶ *Id.*

¹⁸⁷ *Id.* *supra* text accompanying nn. 119-121.

¹⁸⁸ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 140-142. Here the Venetian Christians resemble not only the hate-filled servants of the White Witch who kill Aslan in C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* 150-155 (Scholastic Inc. 1995), but also the mocking crucifiers of Christ. See e.g. *John* 18-19.

Yet, this image may not represent a failing. Perhaps we are called to believe the harsh and miserly Shylock got only his just desserts. He who asked for justice and denied mercy got justice with no mercy. Such a view, however, requires that one come to grips with the precise contours of justice and mercy.

In *Merchant*, Shakespeare provides several possible forms for justice. From the coffins, there is at least the suggestion that justice is encompassed in getting what one wants or getting what one deserves.¹⁸⁹ Yet if the play bears any resemblance to life, then justice is a most uncomfortable concept. If Shylock got what he deserved, then what of Antonio, who ends the play wealthy, embraced by his old friends, and welcomed by their new spouses? If Antonio had gotten what he deserved, what would he have gotten: he who kicked, slurred, and spit on a man because the man was a Jew, who failed to live up to his financial obligations, and who caused a friend to break a vow to his wife?¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, what should friend Bassanio have gotten after so much selfishness had led him to squander the wealth of himself and others and to pressure his best friend to bind himself to an enemy?¹⁹¹ Did Bassanio deserve to have as his wife the wise, gracious, and kind Portia, and to become lord over her vast wealth after he misrepresented to her his motives and betrayed her confidence?¹⁹² If justice does demand that people get what they deserve, then justice is, at best, in *Merchant* an inconsistent concept.

In addition, if justice can be characterized as people getting what they deserve, then justice breeds violence. Throughout Shylock's life the Christians of Venice made sure he got what he deserved, and their justice made him cruel and vengeful. As Shylock had been treated, so would he treat others.¹⁹³ Justice became revenge. Revenge could only escalate violence. Revenge required Shylock to seek the death of Antonio in the name of justice.¹⁹⁴ Revenge required Gratiano to seek the death of Shylock in the name of God.¹⁹⁵ Only law and the wise Portia prevented the justice of the Venetian courtroom from devolving into unrestrained and indiscriminate use of power. When under law Portia ultimately must entrust Venetian justice to Venetian mercy, such ugly use of power is exactly what Venetian justice becomes.¹⁹⁶ Despite our greatest desires to believe otherwise, in

¹⁸⁹ See *supra* text accompanying n. 109.

¹⁹⁰ See *supra* text accompany nn. 76, 115, 150.

¹⁹¹ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 91-99.

¹⁹² See *supra* text accompanying nn. 103-114, 147-151, 176-177.

¹⁹³ Here Shakespeare presents his audience with a mirror image of Christ's Golden Rule: rather than doing "to others whatever you would have them do to you," *Matthew* 7:12, one sees Shylock doing to others as they have done to him.

¹⁹⁴ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 47-58.

¹⁹⁵ See *supra* text accompanying n. 142.

¹⁹⁶ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 122-143. The illusion of revenge enters Belmont when Portia and Nerissa claim they "lay with" the doctor and his clerk because Bassanio and Gratiano gave to these "men" their wives' rings. *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 5, sc. 1. See *supra* text accompanying nn. 170-172.

Merchant, Shakespeare challenges our wisdom that enough guns, enough bombs, and enough violence can bring peace. A harsh Christianity made Shylock. A harsh justice makes a harsh world.

If justice fails in giving the less than good what they deserve, in *Merchant* it fares no better in rewarding those who are good. In *Merchant* none are better than Portia, and she ends up with a superficial husband who doubts her honor, betrays her trust, belittles their union, postpones their wedding, and brings a friend to their honeymoon.¹⁹⁷ Justice services Portia only slightly better because it delivered to her what she wanted, given that what she wanted was Bassanio. Thus, one is left to observe that good people seldom do get what they deserve, a condition that helps the rest of us to realize how truly good they are, and even good people must be careful about what they wish for, for they are in danger of getting it.¹⁹⁸

If justice fares poorly in *Merchant*, how fares mercy? Twice in the play mercy is extended. In one instance, Portia and Nerissa must respond to Bassanio and Gratiano having given away their rings. The two women know how easily the men were persuaded to remove the rings, how they weighed their pride more heavily than their oaths to their wives, how they failed even to mention their wives' worthiness in defending the rings, and how they proclaimed their marriages beneath their feelings for their friends.¹⁹⁹ Thus, Portia and Nerissa know the men for what they are. Yet, the women pray for the men unceasingly on the journey home and accept them back at Belmont. The forgiveness in Belmont arises not out of the deceived love of the first half of the play, but out of a "love that is not blind, [a love that] can look at who we are and still see beyond."²⁰⁰ Yet, this forgiveness yields no more than a hollow triumph. In response to it, neither Bassanio nor Gratiano shows any interest in seeking truth more deeply. Neither hold themselves accountable to their wives but instead, both men rely on excuses and attempts at self-justification when confronted with the wrong they have done to their wives.²⁰¹ Having been warned and seen first-hand that his immodest talk offends Portia, Gratiano persists in it within her

¹⁹⁷ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 144-172.

¹⁹⁸ Robert Bolt, *A Man For All Seasons* 140-141 (Vintage Intl. ed. 1990):

If we lived in a State where virtue was profitable, common sense would make us good, and greed make us saintly. And we'd live like animals or angels in the happy land that *needs* no heroes. But since in fact we see that avarice, anger, envy, pride, sloth, lust and stupidity commonly profit far beyond humility, chastity, fortitude, justice and thought, and have to choose, to be human at all . . . why then perhaps we *must* stand fast a little—even at the risk of being heroes.

¹⁹⁹ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 144-172.

²⁰⁰ Mullins, *Everyman*, *supra* n. 81.

²⁰¹ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 163-178.

presence even as he closes the play with one final careless oath.²⁰²

Thus, the mercy displayed in this context is a fruitless mercy, a mercy that seems not to fuel redemption or a better heart. Perhaps this is because it is a mercy that operates outside of justice. Because forgiveness is obtained so easily and without consequence by Bassanio and Gratiano, they take it for granted; perhaps, they do not even notice that it was ever needed. Certainly, at least Gratiano sees no need to change his behavior, to "go and sin no more."²⁰³ Bassanio meanwhile, thanks his wife for saving his friend rather than for forgiving him.²⁰⁴ Antonio thanks her for reporting on his ships but not for saving his life.²⁰⁵

If justice unrestrained by mercy makes for a harsh world, then perhaps mercy without the constraints of justice makes for an irresponsible one. Mercy cannot demand merely that the shepherd "gaze compassionately upon the wolves as they devour the lambs."²⁰⁶ Sometimes charity takes the form of a fierce fatherly hand protecting his flock from the ravages of wolves.²⁰⁷ In *Merchant*, the mercy that is merely not pressing an advantage has the effect of weakness. If justice needs mercy to make it gentle, then mercy needs justice to make it strong.

This latter point calls to mind the second instance when mercy is extended, that being Shylock's treatment in the courtroom.²⁰⁸ One might well wonder how Shylock, himself, played those events over in his mind when he returned home. Grudgingly, he may have acknowledged that he had received mercy if only because he could have been treated worse. But he could have passed that off as a cheap, proud, and self-serving mercy. It was nothing more than the opportunity for the Christians to show him "the difference of our spirits."²⁰⁹

Portia's actions, however, were different. Piecing together the proceedings, Shylock would realize that from the moment Portia entered the courtroom, she knew that the law gave Shylock no hold over Antonio.²¹⁰ What is more, she must have known that under the law it was Shylock who had done wrong and only Shylock who could be hurt by his insistence on his rights. Yet Portia did not rush to condemn Shylock. Instead, she proceeded through a series of appeals to Shylock that must have been designed not to

²⁰² See *supra* text accompanying n. 178.

²⁰³ *John* 8:11.

²⁰⁴ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 5, sc. 1.

²⁰⁵ *Id.*

²⁰⁶ Michael O'Brien, *Victims*, *Nazareth J.* 20, 22 (Lent 1994).

²⁰⁷ *Id.*; see also Monroe H. Freedman, *The Trouble with Postmodern Zeal*, 38 *Wm. & Mary L. Rev.* 63, 69 (1996) ("[S]uccessful negotiation never happened, however, until my clients could, figuratively, push the other side up against a wall, making it clear that we could hold them there until they decided to discuss the matter amicably.")

²⁰⁸ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 135-142.

²⁰⁹ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc. 1.

²¹⁰ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 122-142.

save Antonio, who was protected under the law, but to save Shylock.

If that realization prodded Shylock to consider the matter further, his thoughts might have turned to the nature of Portia's appeals. Shylock had expressed two reservations about extending mercy: that it was a sign of weakness and that he had no need for it himself. Portia sought to address both these concerns directly.²¹¹ When her appeals for mercy failed to stay Shylock's hand, Portia appealed to his economic self-interest, an incentive that she knew could motivate Shylock.²¹² Thus, although Shylock bore all the risk in the situation and Portia had all the control, she chose to speak in his language.²¹³ Portia argued what she believed to be most true in the way Shylock was most likely to find it persuasive, and when that failed, Portia used the arguments that Shylock thought most true to attempt to save Shylock from himself. To do so, Portia had to listen to and understand Shylock, and she had to humble herself to speak in ways that he would understand rather than insisting on her own way.

In Portia, Shylock could well have seen the merciful God of the Jews: the God of Jonah, who was "a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, rich in clemency, loathe to punish";²¹⁴ the God of Samuel, who was persistent in calling to His children;²¹⁵ and the God of Elijah, who spoke both in words and in deeds so His children would understand.²¹⁶ It is in this light that Shylock would have evaluated Portia's behavior when she refused to allow the Venetians, still ignorant of their own laws, to permit Shylock to leave the courtroom with his principal, and she, instead, insisted that he have all and only justice.²¹⁷ In this, perhaps, Shylock would have seen also the God of David, who imposed justice upon King David when God took the fruit of David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba²¹⁸ and then redeemed David with His mercy when He saw the great king's "broken, humbled heart."²¹⁹

The actions of Antonio, Shylock's bitter enemy, would also have given Shylock reason to pause. Shylock knew Antonio to be penniless. Yet, Antonio did not seek to profit personally from Shylock's undoing. Rather, having received the Duke's assurance that Shylock would be, for the

²¹¹ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 128-129.

²¹² For a parallel discussion in the context of our legal system, see Shaffer et al., *supra* n. 33, at 47-48.

²¹³ For the appearance of a similar dynamic in a Biblical context, see *Acts* 2:8 (Through the apostles, the Holy Spirit speaks to each "in his own language" at Pentecost.); *1 Corinthians* 13:5 (love not insisting on its own way).

²¹⁴ *Jonah* 4:2.

²¹⁵ *1 Samuel* 3:1-18 (God repeatedly calling Samuel until he understands).

²¹⁶ *1 Kings* 18:21-46 (Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal and demonstrates and speaks to the power of God).

²¹⁷ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 135-142.

²¹⁸ *2 Samuel* 12:13-25.

²¹⁹ *Psalms* 51:18-19 ("My sacrifice, God, is a broken spirit; God, You will not spurn a broken, humbled heart."). See also Lee, *supra* n. 32, at 1248-49.

most part, able to retain half his wealth,²²⁰ Antonio indicated that the other half, over which Antonio could take claim, would be used for the profit of Shylock's daughter and her new husband.²²¹ Whatever else Shylock might have thought of Antonio's action, Shylock would have known this act came at a price to Antonio and at a price Antonio knew he would be paying.

Once Shylock leaves the courtroom, the audience does not see him again. They are left to speculate on how he responds to the mocking, arrogant mercy of the Venetians, his encounters with Portia, and the action of Antonio. Yet, the audience does know that the most likely source of the anonymous information about Antonio's ships is Shylock.²²² Thus, they are left to wonder if the efforts of Portia, and perhaps even of Antonio, have begotten an act of mercy from Shylock—Could there have been a redemption of a human heart?

If such a redemption has taken place, Shakespeare did not want his audience to see it coming from Shylock dressed up like a Christian. Shakespeare so frequently mocked the judging by outward appearances throughout the play that he would not have chosen at the end to invite his audience to believe that creating a Christian veneer is a vehicle to creating a Godly heart.²²³ Thus, instead of seeing Shylock once more stripped of his signs of Jewishness, the audience sees only an act of kindness and is left to wonder whether they have, in that, witnessed the miracle of mercy transforming a human heart.

In *Merchant*, Shakespeare said that the quality of mercy "droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven."²²⁴ Yet, the mercy that bore fruit there was a mercy cured by fire. The merciful, then, must invest themselves in knowing those to whom they would show mercy. They must sacrifice. Mercy, to appear merciful, must show its power restrained. It must humble itself. It must bear disappointment. It must endure offense. It must not insist on its own way.²²⁵ And those who would obtain mercy, meanwhile, must trust mercy to restrain power, to temper justice with compassion. They must give and hazard all they have, something much easier to do once we realize we have nothing.²²⁶

Finally, *Merchant* challenges our notion of judgment or at least our view that we judge well. Are we not as guilty of *reduction* as the characters

²²⁰ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 4, sc. 1.

²²¹ See *supra* text accompanying n. 140.

²²² See *supra* text accompanying nn. 174-175.

²²³ See e.g. *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 2 (Portia judging suitors by nationality).

²²⁴ *Id.* at act 4, sc. 1.

²²⁵ 1 *Corinthians* 13:5.

²²⁶ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 109. See also Mullins, *Growing Young*, *supra* n. 88:

I've seen silver turn to dross, seen the very best there ever was, and I'll tell you, it ain't worth what it costs. And I remember my father's house. What I wouldn't give right now just to see him and hear him tell me that he loves me so much.

in the play?²²⁷ Do we not reduce the complexities of human beings to a single trait or point in time and judge them accordingly? The father-husband-son-friend-neighbor becomes merely a Palestinian or a Jew or a fundamentalist or a secular-humanist or a terrorist. In judging, do we see a person only as he is, or do we recognize how that person got to what he is and consider the value in that which he still potentially could become? In these respects are we any different from the people of Venice who judged Shylock as a "Jew" and Antonio and Bassanio as a "friend," or even from Portia who could deftly describe the nature of any man according to his country or race?²²⁸

Antonio, the friend, had his bad with his good. Certainly, he could be devoted and generous, but he could also be bigoted and mean. Bassanio was carefree, but he was also irresponsible and self-centered. Shylock was stern, vengeful, and greedy, but—Was he not a reflection of how he was treated, and as such, did he not have the potential to be much more?

Furthermore, do we, like Portia, succumb to the temptation of Samuel to judge from appearances rather than "look into a man's heart,"²²⁹ and thus, are we disposed to see the "devil" in a man's "complexion" rather than the "saint" in his heart?²³⁰ Similarly, are we, like the Venetians, apt to judge by a person's flowing words, or do we realize that the measure of a human spirit "must appear in other ways than words"?²³¹

All of these temptations, to reduce others to a single trait, to judge by appearances, and to weigh words over deeds, invite us to judge unjustly or inconsistently. In particular they invite us to judge others more harshly than ourselves. There is the potential for each of us to have a little Shylock in him—to be arrogant or naïve enough to hope that everyone, including

²²⁷ Aldous Huxley, *Words and Behavior*, in *Collected Essays* 245, 254 (Harper & Bros. Publishers 1958):

[W]hen particular men and women are thought of merely as representatives of a class, which has previously been defined as evil and personified in the shape of a devil, then the reluctance to hurt or murder disappears. Brown, Jones and Robinson are no longer thought of as Brown, Jones and Robinson, but as heretics, gentiles, Yids, niggers, barbarians, Huns, communists, capitalists, fascists, liberals – whichever the case may be. When they have been called such names and assimilated to the accursed class to which the names apply, Brown, Jones and Robinson cease to be conceived as what they really are – human persons – and become for the users of this fatally inappropriate language mere vermin or, worse, demons whom it is right and proper to destroy as thoroughly and as painfully as possible.

²²⁸ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 2 (Portia judging suitors by nationality).

²²⁹ 1 Samuel 16:7 (Samuel selecting a new king of Israel from among David and his brothers).

²³⁰ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 2.

²³¹ *Id.* at act 5, sc. 1.

ourselves, gets what he deserves. In humbler moments, however, we may well hope that we, at least, can be shown mercy.²³²

The failings of judgments in *Merchant* suggest that the world will fare no better than the foiled suitors of Portia. A world that is cruel will get what it deserves in a world of Shylocks, and a world that pursues form over substance will have to live with what it wanted in a world of Bassanios. Ultimately, such a world must learn that the pursuit of justice is futile outside a context of a people who live in truth and pursue righteousness.

Merchant offers us one additional lesson about the limits of the force of our judgments, even when we do judge well. By all accounts, Shylock's daughter Jessica was "wise, fair, and true",²³³ yet, when she runs away from her father, she steals his money.²³⁴ Atypically, however, Jessica does not spend the money wisely but squanders it quickly and recklessly, and once it is gone, she neither looks back for it nor values that which she purchased with it.²³⁵

One is left to wonder why Jessica ever bothered to take the money. Might it have been because she wanted justice; in taking the money she hoped to be made whole for the loveless years she had lost in her father's house or hoped to punish her father for those years by taking what he valued most. If this be the case, however, Jessica, in the end, must be disappointed because justice cannot undo the past.

The years Jessica lost without a father's love can no more be restored by justice than can the consequences of a drunk driver's collision be undone.²³⁶ At its best, justice can better order the world to allow for a better future, but the events and consequences of the past cannot be erased. Those who petition justice expecting any more can only be disappointed and those who work for justice believing they can deliver more can only be frustrated.

The play is not without its hope, however. Though *Merchant* does not end on the "happily ever after" note all too often attributed to it, it has a gritty kind of optimism and the kind of wisdom only won through hardship.²³⁷ As the play concludes, Portia and Nerissa no longer have the giddy love for their husbands they had for them early in the play—the sort of affection so cheaply bought with a comely face and smooth words.²³⁸ By

²³² See *supra* n. 129.

²³³ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act. 2, sc. 6.

²³⁴ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 74-80.

²³⁵ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 3, sc. 1 (report of Jessica trading a valuable ring of her father's for a monkey).

²³⁶ See e.g. Paula D'Arcy, *Song for Sarah* 52-53, 114-15 (Bantam Books 1981) (in which the husband and one daughter of a family are killed in such an accident while the mother and remaining child are left to find a future).

²³⁷ See *supra* text accompanying n. 125.

²³⁸ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 103-115.

the end, they know what their husbands are, and they hold them accountable for it. But they see beyond it. They pray for their husbands unceasingly, forgive them patiently, and love them faithfully.²³⁹ As the characters leave us, we are forced to recognize that such love comes with no guarantees. "Who chooseth [that path], must give and hazard all he hath' . . . for what?"²⁴⁰ Perhaps for nothing, but perhaps, it is the path to peace, a path to more than we could ever want or merit, a path that could redeem even Shylock.²⁴¹

IV. CONCLUSION: A PRAYER FOR RELIEF

It would be comfortable to pass off *Merchant* as a silly tale by an ancient author who talked funny and hated lawyers.²⁴² As ministers of justice and as the care-takers of the law, however, lawyers cannot dismiss the play so easily.²⁴³ Rather, anyone who cares about the law must allow the play to confront them with the questions Shakespeare wrote it to illuminate. However old the play may be, people today appear no better able to judge wisely and live honestly and in peace than did people four-hundred years ago. Some issues truly are timeless.

One might be able to attribute our lack of progress in these areas of judgment, justice, and mercy to Portia's recognition that some lessons are more easily learned than lived,²⁴⁴ but that can explain only part of our failure. The play suggests that, more fundamentally, we have not yet learned how to live. We do not recognize, for example, that justice and mercy must work together; they are not, as we may suspect, alternative approaches. In addition, we do not understand that justice transcends the moment; thus, in times of judgment, we must look objectively at from where we have come and hopefully to where we might still go. We do not realize that we do not see ourselves clearly enough to judge others, nor do we see others completely enough to judge well. Moreover, we are too cavalier in how we know and treat our laws, and we fail to appreciate how much they serve our communities. Finally, we do not understand how much strength is required to extend mercy and how much patience and humility are required to extend mercy well.

²³⁹ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 5, sc. 1.

²⁴⁰ *Id.* at act 2, sc. 7.

²⁴¹ In *The Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien also invites readers to a mercy of both promise and uncertainty. As the wizard Gandalf says to Frodo, "[D]o not be too eager to deal out death in judgment. For even the very wise cannot see all ends." J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* 93 (Ballantine Books ed. 1973).

²⁴² Many people attribute this view to the statement by Shakespeare's Dick the butcher "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." William Shakespeare, *Part II King Henry VI*, act 4, sc. 2.

²⁴³ Model R. Prof. Conduct Preamble & Scope [1], [5], [11] (ABA 2002).

²⁴⁴ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 1, sc. 2 ("If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions.").

One could at this point throw up one's hands in despair and echo Shakespeare's Puck, who said in another context, "[W]hat fools these mortals be!"²⁴⁵ Yet, this also would be too comfortable, for Shakespeare did not write *Merchant* to foster despair any more than he wrote it to foster complacency. Certainly he wrote it to challenge us, but, more than that, he wrote it to encourage us and give us hope.

In the end, Shakespeare wrote *Merchant* so we might know to spurn the caskets of gold and silver that invite us to grab for what we want or think we deserve and instead "give and hazard all" not knowing what we may get but believing even a world of troubled and wounded hearts can be healed rather than cut further.²⁴⁶ He wrote it so that one day a lawyer might have the good sense or the goodness of heart to pick up the phone rather than press his advantage.²⁴⁷ He wrote it to remind us that even timeless questions have answers.

²⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act 3, sc. 2.

²⁴⁶ *Merchant*, *supra* n. 21, at act 2, sc. 7; see also Thomas À. Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* 148 (The Bruce Publ. Co. 1940) ("you have yet many things which you must give up, and unless you resign them entirely to Me you will not obtain that which you ask.").

²⁴⁷ See *supra* text accompanying nn. 1-21.