

The Merchant of Venice and the Demise of Hospitality

Joan Fitzpatrick

To cite this article: Joan Fitzpatrick (2022) *The Merchant of Venice* and the Demise of Hospitality, Shakespeare, 18:1, 24-45, DOI: [10.1080/17450918.2021.1987508](https://doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2021.1987508)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2021.1987508>



Published online: 02 Nov 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 86



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



The Merchant of Venice and the Demise of Hospitality

Joan Fitzpatrick

School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Loughborough University, Loughborough, UK

ABSTRACT

The Merchant of Venice explores usury and the violation of hospitality's codes in a world where hospitality is no longer a charitable act. Rather, money is the primary motivation and relationships revolve around commercial transactions not social bonds. Robert Wilson's Elizabethan morality play *The Three Ladies of London* provides an important antecedent to Shakespeare's play in its depictions of Usury, Hospitality, and the usurer-Jew Gerontus. The flesh bond and the wealthy Lady of Belmont appear in one of the probable sources for Shakespeare's play: Giovanni Fiorentino's medieval Italian novella *Il Pecorone*. In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare seems to have developed from *Il Pecorone* the idea that insincere hospitality can have serious consequences. Shakespeare also appears to consolidate distinct concepts from Wilson's *Three Ladies* by reshaping the figure of Usury (the sin of medieval morality) and Gerontus (the reasonable Jewish moneylender), into Shylock, a complex figure who elicits both sympathy and revulsion. Where Hospitality is murdered by Usury in Wilson's play, Shakespeare presents Shylock's isolation in terms of alterity, dehumanisation, and social exclusion in a world where loyalty and moral obligations have been replaced by the demands of the market.

KEYWORDS

Usury; *Three Ladies of London*; Jewishness; food; commensalism; medieval

Putting a value on Antonio's flesh and claiming ownership of it in default of a loan, Shylock famously demands his pound of flesh, which recalls the medieval blood libel of Jewish sacrificial murder of Christians and its overtones of cannibalistic feeding. In *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare depicted literal cannibalism, but for this later play men feed on one another metaphorically. Yet considered in the light of the period's codes and conventions of hospitality and dining, we find that the play's central idea is conveyed via food. The allusion to Antonio as the sacrificial 'lamb of God' (a "tainted wether", 4.1.113) invokes Old Testament sacrifice – Abraham's willingness to kill his only son Isaac (Genesis 22:1–13) and the Passover lamb in Exodus (12:3–26) – and Catholic literalistic theophagy (God-eating), via Christ as the lamb of God in the New Testament (John 1:29; 36), that makes explicit the intertwining of religious and gustatory mores. The

anti-Semitic myth of the savage Jew who violates moral codes by consuming the blood of Christians co-existed with the figure of the usurer since both were held responsible for sinful feeding upon Christian society. Usury was exploitative because it contradicted the Christian obligation to behave charitably towards those in need rather than profit from them and it encouraged consumerism. An important means of demonstrating Christian charity was to extend hospitality to strangers as well as friends and the hospitality-code placed obligations on both parties since it depended upon the honesty of the host and the gratitude of the guest.

In his published lectures “Of Hospitality” Jacques Derrida observed the controlling, hierarchical nature of hospitality and how the apparently altruistic act depends upon the othering of the stranger and an assertion of ownership (‘it’s mine to give’). Building on the work of Marcel Mauss, Derrida described “the strange processes of hospitality” that are the laws and customs governing the proffering and receiving of aid that encode the conditional rights and duties of both host and guest (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 75). He observed the paradoxical nature of hospitality whereby, for the very concept to exist, it must contain within itself the opposite concept of inhospitality. For a host to be truly hospitable to some he must deny aid to others. Without a boundary to make such differentiation, the notion of refuge from ‘outside’ that is proffered ‘within’ disappears. Shakespeare understood this paradox as a religious and philosophical problem with everyday ramifications that he dramatised in interactions over money and food.

Shakespeare’s engagement with hospitality is a topic that has hitherto received relatively little attention from critics. In *Hospitality in Early Modern England* Felicity Heal explored the shift from hospitality as a moral and social obligation to our modern sense of it as a private matter of personal preference, but Heal’s study is primarily a work of history that does not venture into analysis of Shakespeare’s plays (1990). Daryl Palmer’s *Hospitable Performances: Dramatic Genre and Cultural Practices in Early Modern England* (1992) considered works by a number of authors including Shakespeare, focusing primarily on his Romantic comedies, with the notable exception of *The Merchant of Venice*, while James Heffernan’s *Hospitality and Treachery in Western Literature* (2014) featured only one chapter on a number of Shakespeare plays and similarly excluded *The Merchant of Venice*. More recently, in a volume of essays entitled *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics and Exchange*, two chapters mention *The Merchant of Venice*: one only briefly in the context of husbandry manuals, and another by comparison with a later play that was the main focus of discussion, *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* by John Day, George Wilkins, and William Rowley (Rosenberg 45; Kaufman 197–98, 203–4, 210–16).

This essay will explore Shakespeare’s treatment of hospitality in *The Merchant of Venice* in the context of usury and the changing significance of hospitality that

attended the demise of medieval feudal society and the emergence of the early modern capitalist market. An important context here is Robert Wilson's relatively neglected earlier play *The Three Ladies of London* (first performed around 1581 and first printed in 1584), which features Gerontus, a Jewish usurer living in Turkey, and the characters Hospitality and Usury (both personifications of these abstract concepts). Lloyd Edward Kermode rightly regards Wilson's play "an important precursor" to Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, noting verbal echoes of Wilson's play in these later works and citing Thomas Cartelli's view that all three plays are testament to the complexity of Elizabethan attitudes to cultural difference (Kermode, "Introduction" 34; Cartelli 259). Also relevant to Shakespeare's treatment of hospitality in *The Merchant of Venice* is the medieval Italian novella *Il Pecorone* by Giovanni Fiorentino, written between 1378 and 1385 and identified as a probable source for Shakespeare's play by Geoffrey Bullough (446, 483–76). Wilson's play and Fiorentino's novella engage with medieval notions of hospitality and the consequences of a breakdown in its codes, which Shakespeare appears to pick up and develop in his treatment of hospitality in *The Merchant of Venice*.

The concept of commensalism (sharing a table and eating with other people) and its opposite, amensalism (an interaction between two different species in which one is harmed or destroyed and the other unaffected), provide useful vocabulary for an exploration of Shakespeare's treatment of hospitality in *The Merchant of Venice*, which remains a hitherto overlooked aspect of Jewish-Christian relations in this play. Commensalism – from the medieval Latin *commensālis*, derived from *com* (together) and *mensa* (table), with *mensālis* meaning 'belonging to the table' – has long been used to discuss the social dimension of food provision and eating by anthropologists, sociologists, historians and, more recently, literary critics, but the term 'amensalism' has traditionally only been used within the field of biology, with its first recorded use in the middle of the twentieth century (OED *commensal*, *adj.* and *n.*; *amensal*, *adj.* and *n.*). The related concept of parasitism – where one species is harmed and the other benefits – is also pertinent here; by using the terms amensalism and parasitism in relation to commensalism, and applying them to early modern drama, we might come to a better sense of the complex nature of generosity and the visceral impulse to destroy in relation to the extension or withdrawal of hospitality and its attendant rituals.

Amongst the medieval gentry hospitality was considered an obligation, being an essential part of courteous behaviour and a sign of the Christian charity that should be offered to those in need irrespective of their status and whether they were known to their host or a stranger. In turn, guests had certain obligations to their host in terms of proper behaviour, including gratitude for the charity they received. Charity was extended also by those beneath the rank of gentry to the needy – the medieval custom of the 'help-ale', a social occasion providing drink, food, and entertainment, was a means whereby ordinary people could raise

money for their friends and neighbours (Bennett, “Conviviality” 19–21) – but there was a greater expectation that the rich would help the poor because they were clearly in a better position to do so. The elite would typically extend an invitation to dine to those of a similar rank in order to establish and reinforce relationships. As C. M. Woolgar pointed out, this enabled the host to signal the esteem in which guests were held since such meals “took a good deal of time” and “the placing of individuals and gifts to them of additional portions or select morsels were very significant benefits” (13). Food might also be provided to the poor in the form of scraps from the main table as alms or even an invitation to dine, with some great households, especially the royal and ecclesiastic, inviting the poor to join them for meals.

Thomas Cantilupe, when Bishop of Hereford (1275–1282), was reported to have invited several poor people to eat with him daily although Woolgar noted that such behaviour was “highly unusual after the mid-fourteenth century, and its disappearance as a charitable act should be counted as one of the social adjustments resulting from the great plague” (15). Hospitality emanating from the gentry and the Church was an ideal that relied on their goodwill towards their social inferiors. The high death rate from the plague and the consequent emergence of a market in labour advantageous to the peasant class was part of a disruption of traditional hierarchies which saw the lower ranks become less reliant upon the largesse of their superiors. As is often the case, economic and social change can be traced by changes in custom and practice relating to hospitality and the provision of food, and my argument here is that it is only by understanding the shift in attitudes toward hospitality that emerged during the later medieval period that we can fully grasp the significance of hospitality in early modern drama.

Also contributing to the demise of hospitality as an obligation, and thus central to my argument, was the emerging marketplace that saw professional establishments offering food and lodging in exchange for money. The medieval cottage industry in which ale was produced on a small scale by the alewife, and sold alongside basic foods such as bread and cheese, developed in the early modern period into what Judith Bennett termed a “capitalized and industrialized” profession dominated by men especially in the larger towns and cities (*Ale, Beer, and Brewsters* 146). Of course hospitality from a private host might also involve a debt of sorts, as identified by Marcel Mauss’s theory of gift exchange that explored the expectation of reciprocity implied by the act of giving (1–16), but the provision of hospitality as a commercial transaction tended to bring into sharp focus the extent and limits of obligations owed and incurred by host and guest.¹ The growth of hospitality as a trade – a significant departure from the old ideal of the beneficent host and grateful guest – was

¹Mauss’s book expounding his theory of gift exchange in primitive societies was first published in 1925 in French as *Essai sur le don* (*An Essay on the Gift*) with the first English edition published in 1954.

in part due to the increasing availability of loans that might underwrite this type of business venture. While there were Biblical warnings against usury, arguments were increasingly being made in the early modern period that a form of controlled usury, with modest levels of interest, was essential for economic prosperity (Kermode, “Introduction” 1–11). For some commentators usury remained a sin and, as C. T. Wright pointed out, “one chief Elizabethan grievance against the usurer was his ruin of the hospitable gentry” (187). This is a grievance considered more recently by David Hawkes who noted that since charity was often equated with hospitality so usury was the antithesis of this explicitly social virtue (95–106).

The Three Ladies of London

Robert Wilson’s play *The Three Ladies of London* explores the effects of usury – and the burgeoning commercialism it enabled – upon hospitality as an obligation to be given gratis by those who could afford it to those in need. As Alan C. Dessen noted, *The Three Ladies of London* is one of several plays that extended the medieval morality tradition, with its allegorical figures representing virtue and vice, well into the late sixteenth century (121–23). It is the only play printed between the years 1500 and 1660 to feature a character named Hospitality and only one of two to feature a character named Usury, the other being Wilson’s sequel play *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, which was first performed around 1588 and first published in 1590 (Berger, ‘Hospitality’; ‘Usury’). In Wilson’s *The Three Ladies of London* Lady Love and Lady Conscience, oppressed by Lady Lucre and her man Usury, rely on Hospitality for succour: when Lucre forces them out of their house, which she has taken as collateral for a loan, Hospitality invites them to dine with him. He offers relatively basic sustenance (“bread and beer, one joint of meat, and welcome, thy best fare”, 4.69–70) for which he is ridiculed by Simplicity, a glutton, who is gently admonished by Hospitality for his lack of understanding: “My friend, hospitality doth not consist in great fare and banqueting / But in doing good unto the poor, and to yield them some refreshing” (4.77–78).² Lady Conscience tells how “Usury hates Hospitality, and cannot him abide, / Because he for the poor and comfortless doth provide” (5.23–24), describing Usury as having “undone many an honest man” and one who “daily seeks to destroy, deface, and bring to ruin, if he can” (5.25–27). For Dessen *Three Ladies* “functions in the same way” as earlier Elizabethan morality plays but “the real step forward” is Wilson’s specific anatomising of London society, which could be done on a larger scale in the new London theatres that were not available to earlier playwrights (126). Kermode went even further in his estimation of the play’s originality, observing that it “is a belighted

²All quotations of the play are from Wilson.

morality, for it has learned from the decades of allegorical drama before it and is illuminated by current affairs and events in its own time (in both theater and political history) that set it apart from its predecessors". Moreover, argued Kermode, it is the first play to present the lending of money and the circulation of money and goods in sexualised and gendered terms where specifically female ills seduce and destroy men ("Money, Gender and Conscience" 269).

In *Three Ladies*, the episodes featuring Mercadorus, a duplicitous Italian merchant who refuses to repay a loan from the Jewish usurer Gerontus, are distinct from the action of the main plot, although Mercadorus features in both. He is responsible for provoking hostility between Usury and Hospitality, telling the former that Hospitality "Did speak against you, and says you bring good honest men to beggary" (5.52). Later in the play, Usury pursues and confronts Hospitality, who is characterised as elderly, with that state's connotation of experience and wisdom but also impending demise: "O, have I caught your old grey beard? You be the man whom the people so praise. You are a frank gentleman, and full of liberality" (8.6–7). Usury rejects Lady Conscience's pleas to spare Hospitality for the sake of God, country, pity, love, and conscience, and is not moved either to think of "the poor ... fatherless children ... the sick, blind, and lame", instead dragging Hospitality away to "kill him secretly" (8.23–25, 32). Dessen referred to "the disappearance of Hospitality who is haled off the stage by Usury never to return again to England" (126) but the demise of Hospitality is more serious than this suggests. There is no doubt that Hospitality has been murdered by Usury because Lady Conscience says so shortly after he is dragged away (8.39) and he will not return to England because he cannot. Moreover, Wilson underlines the moral significance of his murder when Simplicity reports that Hospitality's will "hath given Dissimulation three trees upon a high hill" (8.59), a reference not only to the gallows but, as Kermode observed, "a nod toward the three 'trees' or crosses of Golgotha and the death of Christ, the champion of Hospitality" ("Introduction" 129n59). Notably, it is an Italian who disrupts traditional English notions of hospitality and although Shakespeare's Venice arguably represents (to some extent at least) the city of London, nationality as a signifier of duplicity is less apparent in Shakespeare's play than the insincerity which is signalled via a violation of the codes of hospitality.

Simony subsequently tells Lady Lucre that Hospitality is mourned not just by the wealthy and the well-connected but also the poor who attend his burial in droves (8.85–90). Although Hospitality was aware of the consequences of Usury's actions – telling Conscience "Farewell ... you shall have Hospitality in London nor England no more" (8.36) – Simplicity is not:

why, 'twas time that he was dead.
He was an old churl, with never a good tooth in his head.
And he ne'er kept no good cheer that I could see;

For if one had not come at dinner time, he should have gone away hungry.
 I could never get my belly full of meat;
 He had nothing but beef, bread, and cheese for me to eat.
 (8.40–45)

In an earlier episode Simplicity and Sincerity are invited to dine by Sir Nicholas Nemo, whose last name is Latin for ‘no man’. Although Sincerity understands what is happening (“If no man bid me to dinner, when shall I dine?”) Simplicity remains none the wiser: “I believe, cousin, you be not hungry, that you stand prating” (5.197, 5.208). After Usury’s murder of Hospitality, Lady Conscience complains that she will be cheated at inns and other commercial establishments and so must learn to sell brooms “as a quiet mean to keep myself from begging” (8.151). We know her fears of deception are well-founded since, earlier in the play, Simplicity recalls how Fraud deceived his customers when he was working as a waiter and an ostler at inns in Gravesend and Hertfordshire (2.41–59).

Where Wilson’s Usury is a villain who helps Lucre bring men and women to ruin, the Jewish usurer Gerontus has apparently lent money at a reasonable (although unmentioned) rate of interest and is clearly being cheated by Mercadorus’s refusal to pay back what he owes. Wilson thus avoids the anti-Semitic stereotype of the rapacious Jew that was common from the medieval tradition. The medieval blood libel against the Jews, and the cannibalism it evoked, was part of a discourse that characterised the Jewish diet as strange and their influence upon the diet of others as malevolent. Jews did not eat foods that Christians found perfectly acceptable, including pork and shellfish such as oysters, they had special rules regarding the slaughter of animals for meat, and it was commonly believed that they had a distinctive smell, the *foetor judaicus*, which was thought by many to be the consequence of a divine curse for their part in the death of Christ. Alleged Jewish efforts to disrupt the nourishment of Christians were thought to be both literal and spiritual. Jews were accused of poisoning wells (something Barabas claims to do in Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta*, 2.3.179) and of Host desecration, the most well-known example being the anonymous Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*. In this fifteenth century Miracle play a group of Jews steal the communion Host in order to reenact the murder of Christ and, as is usual with Host desecration stories, they panic when the Host begins to bleed and are consequently converted to Christianity. At one point in the play the Jews throw the Host into a cauldron and then an oven, thus reinforcing their alignment with cannibalism and evoking the common medieval association of a hot kitchen and its cooking equipment with hell and its various means of torture (Anon., *Croxton Play*, lines 42, 46; Pearcy 167–68, 171–73).³ This supposedly Jewish crime is typically

³Croxton’ refers to the village of Croxton (now a town) in East Anglia, which is mentioned by the Second Vexillator in the introduction to the play as the location for its performance (line 74).

medieval, disappearing from later accounts when transubstantiation is no longer a pan-Christian article of faith, but the sense that Jews might interfere with Christian sustenance or, worse, themselves consume Christians (just as Catholics literally consume Christ), tended to linger.

The blood libel and the myth of the Jew as especially blood-thirsty extended to the metaphorical language used about usury. As James Shapiro pointed out, the biblical word for lending at interest, *neshech* also meant 'to bite' and lending money at unreasonably high rates was often termed 'biting usury' (110). Some Christian commentators argued that any form of lending money with interest was wrong. For example in a 1595 sermon entitled *The Arraignment and Conviction of Usurie* Miles Mosse describes even a small amount of interest charged as a "biting" that "will draw blood" and "will consume a man in continuance" (T4v). A poem known as The Dutch Church Libel, an anti-immigrant diatribe posted on the wall of a Dutch church in London on 5 May 1593, compared European foreign traders to Jews in distinctly 'biting' terms: "And like the Jewes, you eate us up as bread" (Freeman 50).⁴ The animosity aimed at recent European immigrants is thus bound up with an older, medieval, animosity toward Jews and the practice of usury that was forbidden to Christians.

Although usury at the rate of 10 per cent was legalised in England in 1545 and again in 1571 (the law had been reversed in 1551), it was still considered a sin for Christians to lend money with interest (Hawkes 24). The medieval legacy of Jewish usury, together with the myth of the blood libel, was exploited in many quarters so that usury could be condemned as a specifically Jewish vice. What David Hawkes referred to as "the conceptual fusion between Judaism and usury" meant that the behaviour of real Jews was beside the point (68). Although relatively few Jews lived in Early modern England – Shapiro put the number at "probably never more than a couple of hundred at any given time in the whole country" (76) – usurers were figuratively, if not essentially, Jews. Indeed the epithet 'Jew' was often applied to indicate cruelty, and although the origins of the term are anti-Semitic, and its use unpleasant, the word was often used to describe behaviour rather than identity (Hawkes 67–71). The connection made between usury and Jews is evident in the discourse surrounding the eating and dining habits of the usurer and thus, by extension, the Jew. The usurer-Jew was accused of gluttony when dining at the expense of another yet starved himself at home, his meanness making him a miserly host and a stingy master whose servants would typically go hungry (Wright 179–89). The antisocial, individualistic nature of the usurer-Jew, which made him exact 'biting' interest from those who made use of his trade, was deemed to extend

⁴The only known copy of what appears to be the full poem is from John Mansell's manuscript (c. 1600), which is currently in the Bodleian Library (MS.Don.d.152 fol.4v) and was transcribed and printed for the first time by Arthur Freeman.

quite naturally to his social interactions, including his antagonism towards charity and, specifically, hospitality.

The historical and cultural context of the usurer-Jew makes Wilson's depiction of Usury and Gerontus all the more interesting, since it eschews the medieval anti-Semitic caricature of the Jew as villainous and rapacious money-lender, relying instead upon the Christian medieval morality tradition to reveal the social ills that attend the lending of money at unreasonably high rates. Janet Adelman's contention that Wilson's Usury is a Jew, in her attempt to balance the positive representation of Gerontus, inadvertently tends to reinforce rather than challenge the common conflation of the Jew and vice (12–23). As Emma Smith observed "Adelman discounts the evidence of the play and instead reconstructs the 'wicked Jewish moneylender' stereotype as something 'reassuring'" even though, as Smith noted, "there is no hint whatsoever in this play that Usury is Jewish" and the brief reference to Usury's Jewish parents in Wilson's sequel play *Three Lords of London* does not erase "the narrative importance of Gerontus's charity in *Three Ladies*" (206, 207). As Smith here shows, the efforts by historians and critics to establish a firm early-modern anti-semitic tradition extends to a perverse (though presumably well-intentioned) misreading of the drama and the context in which it was produced.

Smith's wider point is that Henry Irving's sympathetic portrayal of Shylock in his landmark nineteenth-century production of the play was thought unhistorical by Victorian critics who proceeded to invent a crude Elizabethan anti-Semitism, one that included a caricatured figure of the Jew on stage, which modern critics continue to propagate (191). Gerontus is no saint, providing Mercadorus with "Such trifles as ... will please wantons best" (5.93), as Lucre stipulated, trifles that will be imported to England while a range of "good commodities" leave the country: "all kind of grain" as well as "leather, tallow, beef, bacon, bell-metal and everything" (3.40–42). Exporting useful products, especially food, will raise prices and cause hardship and hunger amongst the poor. Yet Wilson suggests that the blame for this lies squarely with Lucre and Mercadorus; when Gerontus agrees to provide Mercadorus with "things to suck away money from such green-headed wantons" (9.34) he acts as a middle-man (a traditional role for Jews), taking advantage of wealthy English fools rather than exploiting England's poor, which was initiated by Lucre and made worse by Usury's murder of Hospitality. As Smith noted, the figure of Gerontus undermines the notion of an anti-semitic early modern theatre, which modern critics conveniently ignore in their desire to condemn its ubiquity.

The Merchant of Venice

Given Wilson's depiction of a reasonable Jewish usurer, who remains distinct from the sin personified by Usury, why might Shakespeare have decided to

present Shylock as a figure who elicits both sympathy and revulsion, which is a depiction that quite deliberately, it seems, draws upon the anti-Semitic stereotypes with which his audience were familiar? Shakespeare's debt to Giovanni Fiorentino's medieval Italian novella *Il Pecorone*, specifically the novella's treatment of hospitality and the violation of its codes, provides some clues toward an answer. In *Il Pecorone* Giannetto is given ten thousand ducats by his godfather Ansaldo who has borrowed the money from an unnamed Jew at Mestri with a pound of flesh as forfeit. Here the contract is presented seriously by the Jew, not trivialised as a bit of fun: the "merry jeast" [jest] of a flesh-bond ballad "Shewing the crueltie of Gernutus a Jew" (Anon., *A New Song*). As in the ballad, Shylock presents the flesh-bond as a "merry sport" and "merry bond" (1.3.144, 1.3.172), which is not the case in Wilson's *Three Ladies*. The ballad was not published until 1640, although Bullough thought it was "probably pre-Shakespearian" and may have been known by Shakespeare (Bullough 449), but it was to *Il Pecorone* that Shakespeare seems most obviously indebted.

In *Il Pecorone* Giannetto needs the money for a trip to Belmont where a widow, the Lady of Belmont, tricks potential suitors. Her *modus operandi* is explained by the Captain of Giannetto's ship: "anyone who arrives must sleep with her, and if he possesses her he can take her for his wife and become lord of the port and all that country. But if he fails, he loses everything that he has" (Bullough 465). Her trick to avoid marriage is to drug the wine and sweetmeats that her suitors are offered before they retire to bed, thus rendering them unable to perform sexually. This inhospitable trick is not an insignificant plot detail since Ansaldo borrows money from the Jew specifically to fund Giannetto's third trip to Belmont, having lost all his wealth funding the previous trips when Giannetto falls victim to the Lady's deceit. Shakespeare did not incorporate this trick into his play but he does seem to have incorporated the notion that insincere hospitality may have wider consequences. Shakespeare also appears to have picked up on the cultural link between usury and hospitality explored in Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* by combining the figure of Usury and the money-lending Jew to explore the nature of hospitality in a more subtle and nuanced way than the earlier play, which was heavily indebted to the medieval morality tradition.

Before Shylock commits to lending money to Bassanio, for which Antonio will be bound, he is invited to dine with them both. Shylock does not respond to Bassanio's invitation directly but refuses the offer in an aside:

Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into! I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. (1.3.30–35)

Sharing food with the Christians would indicate a sense of community Shylock does not feel, and his refusal to dine aligns him with the those who have been invited but refuse to enter the kingdom of God in Christ's Parable of the Great

Banquet (Luke 14:15–24; Matthew 22:1–14). It is a legal bond rather than the social bond of commensality that motivates Shylock, and indeed the destructive nature of the forfeit to which Antonio is subject in the bond signals the very opposite of commensality. Although the term ‘commensalism’ is used by food historians to describe the concept of sharing a table and eating with other people, the contrasting concept of amensalism, from the field of biology, tends not to feature in discussions of the social and cultural significance of eating. Yet amensalism – an interaction between two species in which one is harmed or destroyed and the other unaffected – is a useful way of thinking about Shylock’s alterity, his impulse to destroy Antonio, and what Shylock desires as the ultimate outcome of their interaction. The related concept of parasitism is also useful here – where one species is harmed and the other benefits – since Shylock’s efforts to destroy Antonio are figured in parasitic terms, yet it is ultimately Antonio who benefits from their interaction and Shylock who loses everything.

The concepts of amensalism and parasitism are evoked from the outset of the play when Shylock announces his resentment towards Antonio for his habit of lending money without interest and for openly criticising (in front of the city’s merchants) Shylock’s trade: “If I can catch him once upon the hip / I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him” (1.3.44–45). Shylock has practical reasons for disliking Antonio and although the reference to an ‘ancient’ grudge conveys a righteous sense of correcting historical wrongs, the grudge as personal (“I will feed” and “I bear him”) tends to undermine the notion that he is seeking revenge on behalf of the Jewish people. If he refuses to dine with the Christians, Shylock must instead eat by himself, selfishly gorging on animosity rather than enjoying any sense of companionable amity; ‘feeding’ suggests the animalistic and carries none of the civilised and civilising connotations of the ‘dining’ offered by Bassanio. Animals are not generally considered to ‘dine’, hence the witticism that the “bear [has not yet] half dined on the gentleman” in *The Winter’s Tale* (3.3.103). When Salerio asks “Why, I am sure if he forfeit thou wilt not take his flesh. What’s that good for?” Shylock’s response again invokes the animalistic: “To bait fish withal. If it will feed nothing else it will feed my revenge” (3.1.49–50), inverting the usual order of things, where fish feed men. This promotion of hostility over friendship is on a par with the sort of false feeding evident in *Il Pecorone* where Giannetto takes the bait offered by the Lady of Belmont; fish-baiting is another act of deceptive hospitality where the fish thinks it is being fed but the real motive in providing food is a hostile one.

Shylock will later accept an invitation to go to supper at Bassanio’s expense, although he does not believe that the invitation signals a sincere gesture of hospitality “I am not bid for love. They flatter me” (2.5.13). Of course Shylock too is guilty of flattery, claiming earlier that he has no intention of calling in Antonio’s debt:

what should I gain
 By the exaction of the forfeiture?
 A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
 Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
 As flesh of muttuns, beeves, or goats.
 (1.3.162–66)

Shylock's comparison between human flesh and the flesh of animals suggests that all might be traded and again the usual order of things is inverted whereby animals are deemed to be more valuable than men. Strictly speaking, Shylock is being honest here, since a piece of human flesh is ordinarily of little use; his real meaning, that the flesh is valuable as a means to revenge, is part of the play's broader concern with hospitality. This is the first in a series of references in the play to the relative usefulness or otherwise of different animals.

Shylock reminds Antonio that he has previously abused him as a “misbeliever, cut-throat dog” and did “foot me as you spurn a stranger cur / Over your threshold” (1.3.118–19). As Marjorie Garber pointed out, here the dog as a homeless stray “resonate[s] with the equally typical period accounts of Jews as homeless and stateless, of ‘mongrel’ race and ‘cut-throat’ tendency” (307), which is a point developed by Bruce Bohrer in his observation that Shylock is repeatedly “bestialized” and as a “stranger dog or marauding wolf he is cast in a parasitic or predatory relation to Christian Venice” (153, 167). Sheep, cows and goats are profitable, and thus valued, because they can be bought and sold for food whereas the “stranger cur” or wolf will consume this resource (human food) without providing anything in return except, perhaps, a nasty bite.

Animal flesh is clearly valued because it provides sustenance but it is also a means for performing the role of good host by feeding guests, which was especially true in a period when meat was a more expensive and valued commodity than it is today. Shylock also considers human beings in terms of their usefulness, using animalistic language to do so: Lancelot is “a huge feeder” but “Snail-slow in profit” (2.5.45–46), which nods to the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jew as a miserable and inhospitable master, although Lancelot disputes Shylock's claim that he is greedy, telling his father, Gobbo “I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs” (2.2.100–2). In *The Jew of Malta* Barabas similarly seeks out a slave who will not consume much: “I must have one that's sickly, an't be but for sparing victuals” (2.3.125–26). In the court scene, justifying his right to take Antonio's flesh as specified in the bond, Shylock rates animals – the rat, pig, and cat – by their relative usefulness to human beings. The rat is an unwelcome guest, with which a “house [will] be troubled” and so must be destroyed (“baned”); the “gaping pig” – presumably its mouth forced opened with an apple or something similar and served up for food – is welcomed by most, though not all, diners (Jews cannot eat it); and the cat is deemed “necessary” because it keeps the house

free of vermin, that might otherwise ruin provisions and spread disease, thus earning its keep (4.1.43–4.1.54).

In the same scene, Shylock makes another comparison between men and beasts when he tells the Christians that the slaves and animals (asses, dogs, mules) they own and mistreat – “use in abject and in slavish parts” (4.1.91) – provide him with a precedent: “The pound of flesh which I demand of him / Is dearly bought. ’Tis mine, and I will have it” (4.1.98–99). As Boehrer noted, Shylock is categorised by the Christians as a member of “an underclass composed of slaves and other nonpersons” and it is via his bond that he “inverts the standard relation between slavish Jew and free Christian by asserting ... [his] title to the prerogatives of the latter” (162). But Shylock appears to be doing more than this. In comparing Antonio to animals that are deemed “estimable” for their flesh (sheep, cows, goats) and considering other animals in terms of their relative usefulness to a household, Shylock aligns himself with the unwelcome “nonpersons” (to borrow Boehrer’s term) ordinarily excluded from Christian hospitality. Rightly sensing no love in Bassanio’s invitation to dine, precisely because he is a Jew, Shylock signals his sense of isolation, not just from Christian community and commensality, but from humanity itself.

Jewish separateness – not from humanity but as a distinct people fleeing persecution – is also invoked in the play’s concluding scene when, in response to the news from Portia that he and Jessica will inherit Shylock’s wealth, Lorenzo alludes to the Jewish Old Testament story of the Exodus from Egypt: “Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way / Of starved people” (5.1.294–95). The manna which appears the morning after the fleeing children of Israel complain of hunger is described variously as bread and “like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey” (Exodus 16:15; 16:31). Here God is the ultimate host, providing sustenance in a time of need, and yet this allusion sits uneasily in the context of the play since the recipients of Shylock’s wealth are not deservedly needy but wasteful. Earlier in the play, as Tubal heard and reports, they exchanged a ring of great value to Shylock not for necessary food or shelter but for a pet monkey (3.1.110). Antonio’s comparison of himself with food – “I am a tainted wether of the flock, / Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit / Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me” (4.1.113–15) – also invokes scripture, with its allusion to Christ as the Lamb of God in the New Testament (John 1:29; 36), and perhaps even the Edenic apple, and suits Antonio’s sense of himself as a martyr. Ironically, it also invokes the lamb of the Jewish Passover (Exodus 12:3–26) and mirrors Shylock’s claim that human flesh is of little value to him when he means precisely the opposite.

Later, Lancelot figures the lovers’ relationship in financial terms and in terms of possible food-shortages when he mocks Jessica’s conversion to Judaism: “This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs. If we grow all to be pork-eaters we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money”

(3.5.21–24). Boehrer observed that in the context of the emerging fashion for animals as pets, Jessica’s monkey signals a prodigality and lack of productivity that extends to Jessica herself, in line with the historical shift in the status of housewife from cottage producer to economic consumer (157–59). As Boehrer and others noted, Jessica’s monkey presumably provides her with affection, thus taking the place of the family she has lost. Moreover, her disguise as a boy signals her social subordination to Lorenzo – reinforced by her descent to meet him on the main stage – and like her monkey or indeed any pet, she becomes “the passive recipient of [Lorenzo’s] nurturance and attention” (Boehrer 158–60). The irony of Lorenzo’s reference to manna from heaven would not have been lost on those who were familiar with the Biblical episode in full: although Moses instructs the Israelites to gather all the manna “some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them” (Exodus 16:20). God will provide, as any good father or host ought, but humanity has an obligation to prove themselves worthy recipients of his generosity.

Shylock agrees to dine with the Christians because he likes the thought of wasting Bassanio’s money, the very money he supplied to generate a debt, and the situation affords Shylock a kind of cannibalistic pleasure: “... I’ll go in hate, to feed upon / The prodigal Christian” (2.5.14–15). This mutually insincere proffering and acceptance of an invitation to dine signals a breakdown in the codes of hospitality and would have keyed an Elizabethan audience to expect disaster. Yet alert playgoers would probably have registered the violation of conventions of hospitality somewhat earlier in the play when Portia plays the role of gracious hostess yet mocks her guests behind their backs and delivers her notoriously racist remark about the departing Morocco, “Let all of his complexion choose me so” (2.7.79). An early modern audience would have understood ‘complexion’ to refer to temperament as well as skin-colour but Portia’s earlier reference to “the complexion of a devil” in the context of Morocco’s forerunner (who presumably has dark skin) and Morocco’s anticipation of her racism (“mislike me not for my complexion”, 2.1.1) sets the racist tone that pervades the scenes in which he features. Like the Lady of Belmont in *Il Pecorone*, Portia is an insincere host and, like Giannetto, Morocco takes the apparent generosity he is offered at face-value.

Of course Morocco is not drugged like the suitors in *Il Pecorone* and he merely makes the wrong choice of casket, but the very act of choosing means forfeiting an important social and economic role, that of husband: “swear before you choose, if you choose wrong / Never to speak to lady afterward / In way of marriage” (2.1.40–42). As Marc Shell observed, the skull and scroll that Morocco finds inside the gold casket signals that he “will be made as barren as Antonio believes metal to be” (Shell 72), a reference to Antonio’s earlier description of usury as “a breed of barren metal” (1.3.132). The right to marry and produce an heir is also denied to Portia’s subsequent suitor,

Aragon, yet this forfeit is apparently made void by the schedule inside the casket he selects that reads “Take what wife you will to bed” (2.9.69). Shell is right to put this in terms of ethnicity and religion given the repeated references to Morocco’s complexion: “unlike the black Muslim, the white Christian is allowed to try to generate kin in wedlock”, which was a point picked up by Kim Hall in her later analysis of miscegenation in the play (Shell 72; Hall 98). Neutralising the threat posed by her black Muslim suitor prepares the audience for Portia’s adversarial treatment of another ethnic and religious outsider, Shylock the Jew, who will be made to carry the full weight of blame for the Christian resort to usury.

Portia’s violation of the hospitality code is complicated by the controlling influence of her dead father’s instruction to receive suitors and her earlier expression of interest in Bassanio whom she deems “worthy of ... [Nerissa’s] praise” (1.2.117–18). Yet her reassurance to Morocco that he is “as fair / As any comer I have looked on yet / For my affection” (2.1.20–22) is disingenuous, giving a clue to the audience (and one that her guest presumably does not detect) that she does not favour him or any of the suitors she has so far met. Her deceit is unsettling given her apparent show of generosity according to hospitality’s codes: inviting Morocco to dine with her and make his choice of casket “after dinner” (2.1.44). In Michael Radford’s film adaptation of the play the scene with Morocco was played for laughs and he came across as a buffoon unlearned in the niceties of polite behaviour, at one point drawing his sword and scaring the ladies present. Writing before release of the film, B. J. Sokol found textual warrant for this interpretation, considering Morocco to be “vain-glorious and magniloquent, over-vaunting his heroic valour and sexual ‘blood’” yet with an important corrective, that “Morocco is fully as brave as he claims to be. Because he risks a heavy loss for her” (171, 172). He noted the tendency of modern critics to follow C. L. Barber’s “lauding of idyllic Belmont” as a place distinct from Venice; as Barber put it, “Shylock and the accounting mechanism which he embodies are ... rhapsodically transcended in Belmont” (Sokol 170; Barber 173). With her quips and sneers, Portia is shown to lack compassion and, as Sokol observed, Belmont seems a bastion of racial prejudice (172). Yet Morocco’s description of his skills in battle (“By this scimitar / That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince ...”) and his claims of bravery in the face of aggression and danger (both human and animal) allow for an additional dimension to his bravery, one that is rooted in the past.

The eloquence with which Morocco delivers a speech loaded with Christian terms (Portia is a “shrine”, a “mortal breathing saint”, 2.7.40) harks back to a chivalrous past that is at odds with a world where money is paramount, a world where Portia is described by Graziano as a valuable prize, Bassanio’s “[golden] fleece” (3.2.239). Morocco’s rhetoric of bravery is arguably overblown but it is precisely in order to demonstrate the lengths to which he would go “to win the lady” (2.1.31), with all the chivalric ideals implied, that he speaks in

such terms. When choosing the casket Bassanio rejects “gaudy gold”, proclaiming “Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee” (3.2.102) yet when he first speaks of Portia it is in financial terms, reminding Antonio that he has frittered away his own money (“disabled mine estate”, 1.1.123) and describing Portia as “a lady richly left” before commenting on her beauty and virtues where, even here, she is figured in financial terms (“her sunny locks / Hang on her temples like a golden fleece”, 1.1.169–70). Morocco’s bravery, chivalry, and ultimately, his manners expose Portia’s racism, just as Portia’s deceit as hostess and Bassanio’s fortune-hunting undermine Christian claims to moral superiority. Yet the ethos of the market that dominates Shakespeare’s Venice, and early modern London, also extends to Belmont where guests who ought to be sincerely welcomed are subjected to backbiting and romance is measured in gold.

As a Moor it might seem strange that Morocco should evoke a chivalric Christian past and its obligations to behave hospitably, but here he resembles Gerontus the Jew in Wilson’s *Three Ladies of London* who places faith above profit. When Mercadorus is on the verge of converting to Islam to escape his financial obligations, Gerontus instead forgives the debt. In Wilson’s play “all debts are paid” if the debtor “forsake his faith, king, country, and become a Mahomet” (14.14–15). David Hawkes’s belief that “Gerontus’s Jewish credentials are seriously undermined when he swears ‘by mighty Mahomet’ ...” (69) does not take into account that, as a Jew living in Turkey, Gerontus is appealing to the law of the land – “pay me my money ... / Or by mighty Mahomet I swear I will forthwith arrest ye” (12.3–4) – in much the same way that Shylock will “crave the law” (4.1.203) in a Christian court.

Shylock’s reluctance to dine with the Christians – expressed at first in a bravado aside and subsequently in a more cautious suspicion of their insincerity – is apparently justified since it is during supper with Bassanio that his daughter Jessica absconds with Lorenzo. It is not clear whether Bassanio is aware of Jessica’s plan to flee but Shylock is confident of Salerio’s participation in the plot: “You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter’s flight” (3.1.23–24). That Jessica should take the time before fleeing to furnish herself and her lover with her father’s “gold and jewels” (2.4.31) reinforces Shylock’s sense of a world that has forgotten its moral obligations and where human relationships are forged in and around commercial interests. Earlier in the play Lancelot invokes the old morality tradition of valuing feudal loyalty over self interest when he weighs the devil’s encouragement to flee his master with the urging of his conscience to stay in Shylock’s employ (2.2.1–29). The tradition loses and he leaves.

Old Gobbo’s present of a dish of doves, intended for Lancelot’s current master Shylock, is instead offered to Bassanio in Lancelot’s bid to win preferment. Wealthy medieval households would extend hospitality and exchange gifts of high status foodstuffs in order to consolidate and extend social networks, but this means of gaining favour was also available to those who were

less well-off. As Woolgar observed, small gifts of food “were of exceptional importance and cumulatively of considerable effect, for these were gifts that anyone might make” (8). Woolgar provides evidence of modest food gifts, for example apples and pears, being offered by tenants and servants to the social elite, noting that “in the medieval village ... [food] was the most common form of gift” between and across social groups (8). Although the practice later waned, food gifts as a means of constructing and consolidating a bond between giver and recipient continued into the early modern period. Felicity Heal describes the Leighs of Stoneleigh, Warwickshire “who as a Catholic family had an almost antiquarian commitment to hospitality” and were providing food gifts to their tenants at the close of the seventeenth century (*Hospitality* 69–70). Although the food gift became marginalised by court and polite society in the early modern period, Heal notes that “it retained a significant cultural role in articulating relationships and providing for wants that could not wholly be satisfied by the market” (“Food Gifts” 70). Poor tenants were more likely to value a food gift for the practical use to which it might be put but the symbolic value of a gift from tenant to master was also significant.

Ignoring the intended recipient of Gobbo’s gift, David Goldstein considered it suggestive of “the kind of metaphorical cannibalism of which the Protestants so often accused the Catholics”, noting that where the living dove symbolises the Holy Spirit, the dead bird that is eaten invokes the Jewish Old Testament “symbol of sacrifice and devourment” (*Eating and Ethics* 79). This line of argument is overly convoluted. Catholics consume the body of Christ, not the spirit, and although the dove is indeed the Lord’s bird of choice for sacrifice in Leviticus (1:14) it is also, as Goldstein acknowledged, “Noah’s harbinger of peace” (*Eating and Ethics* 79). The primary significance of Gobbo’s dish, it seems, is not cannibalistic – unless we are to imagine live doves feeding upon Gobbo’s dead ones – but rather the ease with which loyalty might be transferred from one master to another, which is related to the play’s broader concern with the transition from Jew to Christian. That doves were considered a relatively fine foodstuff in the period indicates the aspirational nature of Gobbo’s gift: he is keen to make a good impression upon Lancelot’s master and early modern playgoers would presumably have read his gift in these terms.

Early moderns would have understood Gobbo’s food gift as an old-fashioned gesture harking back to an idealised world of feudal loyalty and elite largess, with the expectation of reciprocity that the gift implied. In his desire for a new master, Lancelot subverts this older meaning of the food gift and thus represents the new, proto-capitalist world where labour can be bought and sold and loyalty exchanged. Of course Shylock too is part of this new world whilst Antonio, characterised by Shylock as a “fool that lent out money gratis” (3.3.2), exploits the benefits of both worlds: providing a market for Shylock’s trade whilst at the same time enabling himself to remain free of the taint of the sin of usury. Bassanio too, characterised by Shylock as profligate, benefits

from both worlds. Exploiting the old fashioned loyalty of friendship and the appeal of a good investment, Bassanio asks Antonio to “shoot another arrow that self way / Which you did shoot the first” (1.1. 148–49) and fund his trip to Belmont where the investment does indeed pay off.

Given the transactional nature of the relationship between Antonio and Shylock it is ironic that the latter should be punished for maintaining his right to uphold the contract that Antonio has voluntarily entered into. As in Wilson’s *Three Ladies of London*, leaving the Jew unpaid accompanies religious conversion. Whilst Shylock’s determination to extract his pound of flesh serves to reinforce the anti-Semitic medieval stereotype of the blood-thirsty Jew, the punishment that he convert to Christianity, in addition to the other punishments he receives, is particularly harsh and serves to assert Christian dominance over the outsider in Venice. Where Gerontus is appalled at Mercadorus’s plan to “turn Turk” to avoid what he owes (“I cannot think you will forsake your faith so lightly”, 12.16), Antonio insists upon Shylock’s conversion to Christianity. Brett Hirsch warned against a tendency in some criticism to overstate Gerontus’s virtue, and points to his “questionable motivation” in forgiving Mercadorus his debt (48). Not only would responsibility for another man’s apostasy be bad for business, argued Hirsch, but Gerontus ungenerously “dismisses the Merchant’s initial plea” for a brief extension (“three or four days”, 12.5) on the payment of his debt (47). Reputation certainly has a part to play in Gerontus’s decision to allow Mercadorus to dodge his debt – “I would be loath to hear the people say it was ‘long of me / Thou forsakest thy faith” (14.37) – but this does not entirely undermine his virtue in putting faith before profit nor his, perfectly reasonable, desire to retain his good name. Hirsch characterised Gerontus’s refusal to grant Mercadorus the extension he requests in scene 12 as ungenerous and impatient but this overlooks the “four or five days” extension Gerontus has already granted Mercadorus earlier in the play (“I’ll take your faith and troth once more; I’ll trust to your honesty”, 9.23). This seems inordinately generous on the part of Gerontus given the fact that Mercadorus has been avoiding his debt, which should have been paid within three months, for a full two years.

Notably, the manner in which Gerontus releases Mercadorus from his debt prefigures an important moment in Shakespeare’s court scene. Just as Mercadorus is about to renounce his faith with “I protest and swear to be true to this country during life, and thereupon I forsake my Christian faith – ” (14.28–29), he is interrupted by Gerontus’s “Stay there, most puissant judge!” (14.30). As with Portia’s “tarry a little”, the action is taken to the brink and then interrupted. In Wilson, the interruption signals a Jew’s virtue while in Shakespeare it signals a Christian’s cunning that will disallow Shylock’s bond on a legal technicality: “This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood” (4.1.303). When Mercadorus is released from his debt it becomes clear that his threatened conversion was simply a ruse. The Judge comments that “Jews

seek to excel in Christianity, and Christians in Jewishness" (14.46), invoking the common early modern usage of 'Jew' as adjectival and suggesting wholly negative attributes rather than ethnicity or religion.

Having cozened Gerontus, Mercadorus will return to England: "Me be a Turk? No. It will make my Lady Lucre smile / When she knows how me did da scald Jew beguile" (15.58–59). Mercadorus abused Gerontus in similar terms earlier when, not believing Mercadorus will convert to Islam merely to avoid his debt, Gerontus exits to have him arrested and Mercadorus proclaims "Marry, farewell and be hanged, sitten, scald, drunken Jew!" (12.19). 'Scald' could mean scabby, as a consequence of the skin disease scall, and was also used figuratively to mean worthless and contemptible. It was used earlier in the play when Mercadorus tells Usury that he has sided with him "against a scald old churl called Hospitality" (5.51). The other epithets used to abuse Gerontus conform to the typical anti-Semitic language used about Jews: that they smell offensive ("sitten" means 'shitten') and that they are gluttonous ("drunken") when drinking is at the expense of others. These descriptions do not accord with the behaviour of either Hospitality or Gerontus and reflect negatively only on Mercadorus.

Similarly in *The Merchant of Venice* Graziano taunts Shylock when it becomes clear Shylock has lost the right to take Antonio's flesh, including repeatedly calling for him to be hanged at his own hands or the hands of others (4.1.361, 4.1.376, 4.1.396–97). Although Shylock is less sympathetic a figure than Gerontus, Graziano's gloating, continuing after Shylock's humiliation, is unsettling. Wilson's *Three Ladies* concludes with the trial of Lucre for adultery, robbery, and allowing the murder of Hospitality; Conscience too is put on trial for being Lucre's bawd, her corruption visible in her face, which is "spotted with all abominations" (17.33). Conscience bears witness against Lucre, telling how all her troubles began "When Hospitality had his throat cut by Usury" (17.69). The Judge pronounces sentence upon the three ladies, sending Lucre and Love to hell (a sentence possible in the world of morality drama) and Conscience to prison, and the play ends with a moralising appeal for restraint from covetousness: "That we be not corrupted with the insatiate desire of vanishing earthly treasure" (17.103). Shakespeare's conclusion is less satisfactory in terms of moral certainty.

The embodiment of Hospitality bookends *The Three Ladies of London*, but the notion has a more diffuse and nuanced presence in *The Merchant of Venice*. In both plays the old medieval obligation to provide genuine hospitality is present but superseded by the shift toward an early modern sense of individualism and the triumph of the market. Both plays engage with their medieval inheritance. In *Three Ladies* Wilson invokes the morality tradition whereby usury is sinful and causes the demise of the old hospitality, and is pointedly not the behaviour of the virtuous Jewish money-lender Gerontus. Wilson seems keen to separate constructive money-lending from destructive usury

and to separate the man as lender from the activity of lending. Wilson steers clear of medieval anti-Semitic tropes, except those that come from the mouth of the unpleasant Mercadorus, perhaps as a means of distinguishing his play from the older morality tradition where all usury would be considered a sin and thus reflect the reality of an early modern economy where usury is necessary but ought not to be abusive. Wilson seems also to be calling for a middle way between individualism and the market on the one hand and feudal charity on the other where the demise of Hospitality is a step too far.

Shakespeare too seems to recognise the corrosive effect that a lack of charity, in its broadest sense, can have upon human relations. It is easy to show hospitality to one's friends but the real test of Christian charity is to extend it to strangers. It appears that Shakespeare deliberately exploits medieval anti-Semitism in his delineation of Shylock and those around him to explore the nature of alterity, the effect of hostility as a consequence of alterity upon the individual and society, and the extent to which traditional Christian virtues are tested or undermined by older ideas about identity (specifically Jewishness) in an emerging capitalist economy. Shylock knows that he is not welcome at Bassanio's table: his "I am not bid for love" (2.5.13) is an observation that signals his isolation from Christian society and commensality. It is thus not surprising that Shylock, in turn, will show no love to the Christians. Upon insisting that he will have his bond, Shylock tells Antonio "Thou called'st me dog before thou hadst a cause, / But since I am a dog, beware my fangs" (3.3.6–7). These fangs will emerge in the only source of power Shylock has: his 'biting' (or perhaps more specifically his 'cutting') usury until that power is taken from him by the court that will also strip from him his identity as a Jew.

We saw earlier that in his refusal to share food with the Christians, refusing to be part of their community, Shylock aligns himself with those who have been invited but refuse to enter the Kingdom of God in Christ's Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15–24; Matthew 22:1–14). Ironically, in Christian terms, Shylock's forced conversion at the end of the court scene functions as an act of hospitality because it allows him to enter God's kingdom, yet simultaneously reveals the paradoxical nature of hospitality raised by Derrida and discussed at the outset of this essay. Hospitality is conditional and exclusionary: to function properly it must include inhospitality and because, according to Christians, Jews cannot enter the Kingdom of God, so Shylock must renounce his faith. By doing so, he will meet the Christian condition that only those who accept Christ as their saviour are welcome at the Great Banquet, even if, paradoxically (and tragically), Shylock has no desire to attend the celebration.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Works Cited

- Adelman, Janet. *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in The Merchant of Venice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Anon. *A New Song: Shewing the Crueltie of Gernutus a Jew*. STC 11796.7. London: By E. P. for I. Wright, 1640.
- Anon. *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*. Ed. John T. Sebastian. Middle English Texts. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2012.
- Barber, C. L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: a Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959.
- Bennett, Judith M. *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Bennett, Judith M. "Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England." *Past and Present* 134 (1997): 19–41.
- Berger, Thomas L. *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama: Printed Plays, 1500–1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Boehrer, Bruce. "Shylock and the Rise of the Household Pet: Thinking Social Exclusion in *The Merchant of Venice*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50 (1999): 152–70.
- Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. Vol. 1: Early Comedies [*The Comedy of Errors*; *The Taming of the Shrew*; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Love's Labour's Lost*; *The Merchant of Venice*]; Poems [*Venus and Adonis*; *The Rape of Lucrece*]; *Romeo and Juliet*. 8 vols. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957.
- Cartelli, Thomas. "Shakespeare's *Merchant*, Marlowe's *Jew*: The Problem of Cultural Difference." *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1988): 255–60.
- Derrida, Jacques, and Anne Dufourmantelle. *Of Hospitality*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Dessen, Alan C. "The 'Estates' Morality Play." *Studies in Philology* 62 (1965): 121–36.
- Freeman, Arthur. "Marlowe, Kyd, and the Dutch Church Libel." *English Literary Renaissance* 3 (1973): 44–52.
- Garber, Marjorie. "Shakespeare's Dogs." *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Los Angeles, 1996*. Ed. Jonathan Bate, Jill L. Levenson, and Dieter Mehl. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998. 294–313.
- Goldstein, David B. *Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare's England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Hall, Kim. "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Colonization and Miscegenation in *The Merchant of Venice*." *Renaissance Drama* 23 (1992): 87–111.
- Hawkes, David. *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Heal, Felicity. *Hospitality in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Heal, Felicity. "Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England." *Past and Present* 199 (2008): 41–70.
- Heffernan, James A. W. *Hospitality and Treachery in Western Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Hirsch, Brett D. "Jewish Questions in Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London*." *Early Theatre* 19 (2016): 37–56.
- Kaufman, Sheiba Kian. "'Her Father Loved Me, Oft Invited Me': Staging Shakespeare's Hidden Hospitality in *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*." *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Exchange*. Ed. David B. Goldstein and Julia Reinhard Lupton. New York: Routledge, 2016. 197–221.

- Kermode, Lloyd Edward. "Introduction." *Three Renaissance Usury Plays: Robert Wilson 'The Three Ladies of London', William Haughton 'Englishmen for My Money', and Robert Tailor 'The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl'*. Ed. Lloyd Edward Kermode. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009. 1–78.
- Kermode, Lloyd Edward. "Money, Gender and Conscience in Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 52 (2012): 265–91.
- Marlowe, Christopher. *The Jew of Malta*. Ed. David Bevington. Revels Student Editions. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Trans. Ian Cunnison. London: Cohen and West, 1966.
- Mosse, Miles. *The Arraignment and Conviction of Usurie*. STC 18207. London: The Widdow Orwin, for Thomas Man, 1595.
- Palmer, Daryl W. *Hospitable Performances: Dramatic Genre and Cultural Practices in Early Modern England*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1992.
- Pearcy, Roy J. "Does the Manciple's Prologue Contain a Reference to Hell's Mouth?" *English Language Notes* 11 (1974): 167–75.
- Radford, Michael. *The Merchant of Venice*. Motion Picture. Movision/Avenue Pictures, 2004.
- Rosenberg, Jessica. "A Digression to Hospitality: Thrift and Christmastime in Shakespeare and the Literature of Hospitality." *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Exchange*. Ed. David B. Goldstein and Julia Reinhard Lupton. New York: Routledge, 2016. 39–66.
- Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Shell, Marc. "The Wether and the Ewe: Verbal Usury in *The Merchant of Venice*." *The Kenyon Review* 1 (1979): 65–92.
- Smith, Emma. "Was Shylock Jewish?" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64 (2013): 188–263.
- Sokol, B. J. "Prejudice and Law in *The Merchant of Venice*." *Shakespeare Survey* 51 (1998): 159–173.
- Wilson, Robert. "The Three Ladies of London." *Three Renaissance Usury Plays: Robert Wilson 'The Three Ladies of London', William Haughton 'Englishmen for My Money', and Robert Tailor 'The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl'*. Ed. Lloyd Edward Kermode. The Revels Plays Companion Library. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009. 79–163.
- Woolgar, C. M. "Gifts of Food in Late Medieval England." *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011): 6–18.
- Wright, Celeste Turner. "Some Conventions Regarding the Usurer in Elizabethan Literature." *Studies in Philology* 31 (1934): 176–97.