

Textual Deviancy in *The Merchant of Venice*

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Although the thematic issues it poses have made *The Merchant of Venice* increasingly problematic in recent decades, so much so that any company that sets out to produce the comedy must weigh the effect it might have upon impressionable playgoers, the text of the work is rightly regarded as one that confronts us with, at most, minor difficulties. Modern printings are based essentially upon the 1600 First Quarto, which seems to have been set into type with great care by methodical compositors, and which is generally thought to derive either from a reasonably clean authorial manuscript or from a conscientious scribal copy of one. As a result anyone who collates today's most popular and widely employed editions will discover no more than a handful of minor discrepancies between one rendering of the play's dramatic blueprint and another.¹

This kind of editorial consensus is, of course, reassuring, particularly when it relates to a title that has generated so much controversy in other respects. Owing to the premium such concord places on uniformity, however, especially with regard to the maintenance of current conventions in orthography, grammar, and lexicology, the usual approach to *The Merchant of Venice* will often deprive 21st-century readers of the opportunity to experience nuances of sound and sense which emanate from inconsistencies in its original text – subtle variations in spelling and punctuation, for example – and which appear to have been integral to the writer's conceptual process.

I would argue that a close look at the publication in which this work was initially made available to the Elizabethan public will disclose a number of characteristics that provide helpful clues to Shakespeare's artistry. As such they merit our attention, not merely because of their intrinsic interest, which is incalculable, but because of the questions they compel us to ponder about linguistic criteria and hermeneutic procedures that continue to be applied to this and similar texts despite a growing body of evidence that post-Jacobean "normalizing" practices, which by definition are alien to any archaic features they modify, have systematically obscured significant distinctions between Shakespeare's orientation to language and our own. By imposing 20th- and 21st-century standards on all the discourse in 16th- and 17th-century works such as *The Merchant of Venice*, we've largely incapacitated ourselves from noticing, let alone appreciating, many of the advantages a comparatively flexible and unfettered medium, with its amenability to deviations that would have been precluded by later canons of semantic rectitude, supplied a Renaissance wordsmith of peerless genius.²

With an admiring nod to poet Henry Reid, I propose to launch these explorations with the "Naming of Parts." In the typical 20th-century edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, the young apprentice who abandons Shylock to join Bassanio's retinue is presented to us as *Lancelot*, an appellation that never occurs either in the 1600 First Quarto or in the primarily derivative 1623 First Folio printing. For the playwright, and for his earliest theatergoers and readers, this Clown appears to have been known solely as *Launcelet*, a name that can be translated "little lance" or "small knife." In all probability Shakespeare was amusing his theater patrons with a variation on *Launce*, the moniker that Will Kempe, the comic virtuoso who is believed to have been the first actor to inhabit both roles, carried as Launcelet's predecessor in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Like *Launce*, *Launcelet* is a handle with phallic implications,³ and those implications manifest themselves not only in the scene (II.ii) in which the Clown depicts himself as something other than “an honest mans sonne” – since, as he says, “my Father did something smacke, something grow to” – but during a later colloquy (III.v) in which Lorenzo, reacting to Jessica’s report that Launcelet has cast aspersions on her husband’s credentials as an upright “member of the common-wealth,” reminds a feisty servant that “the Moore is with child” by him.⁴

Only once in the earliest texts – in a single passage of the unauthoritative 1619 Second Quarto – does the form *Lancelot* emerge.⁵ There is every reason to infer, in short, that the playwright who devised this character went out of his way to eschew a precise orthographic equivalence between Launcelet’s name and that of the Arthurian knight it calls to mind. So why have editors since the fourth decade of the 17th century presumed to bestow upon Shakespeare’s Clown a mock-heroic dignity his author evidently declined to accord him? As Falstaff might put it, a question to be ask’d.

And speaking of Launcelet, how should we render the Clown’s surname? Before “*old Gobbo*” enters with his basket in II.ii, his loquacious offspring refers to himself several times as “*Launcelet Iobbe*.” This, it may surprise us to learn, is the only spoken form in which the Clown’s patronymic occurs in Q1, and it is limited to the soliloquy with which the scene commences. Like *Claudius*, in other words (an identity which is provided for the usurping King in the opening stage direction of *Hamlet* and in the immediately succeeding speech heading of the 1604/5 Second Quarto printing of I.ii, but which is never voiced in the tragedy’s spoken text), *Gobbo* (which means “lump” or “humpback,” and which would carry a hard-g sound in modern Italian) occurs only in the original stage directions and speech headings. It is a purely literary version of Launcelet’s family name, and so far as we can determine it was never enunciated from any stage during the playwright’s lifetime.

What’s more, the Clown’s wordplay on what the dramatic context – a delightful, and often brilliant, parody of tropes from the medieval *psychomachia* – shows to be a variation of *Job* can be construed as an indication that, whether rightly or wrongly, Shakespeare thought of both *Iobbe* and *Gobbo* as proper nouns to be articulated with a soft-g sound.⁶

During a fascinating comment on this passage in her meticulous and thought-provoking edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, M. M. Mahood informs us that “A famous Venetian church is dedicated to S. Giobbe, i.e. Job.”⁷ Professor Mahood goes on to observe that in the 1663 Third Folio, “*Iobbe*” becomes “*Job*.” But even if she is on firm ground to infer that “The name ‘Gobbo’ may derive from *il Gobbo di Rialto*” (a “crouching stone figure” who supported “the platform from which laws were promulgated” in Venice), it may well be that what Mahood ascribes to Shakespeare’s “initial uncertainty about how to spell” the Clown’s name in *The Merchant of Venice* can be explained with equal persuasiveness in a less condescending fashion. To my mind, the shift from *Iobbe* in Launcelet’s soliloquy to the *Gobbo* to be found in the stage directions and speech headings of II.ii and subsequent scenes is more plausibly accounted for as an example of the dramatist’s habitual propensity to have things both ways. To be strictly correct, Shakespeare would have needed to go with either *Giobbe* or *Gobbo*. What he seems to have opted for instead was a witty, if solecistic, conflation of two Italian words, to yield a coinage that sophisticated but tolerant readers of the First Quarto might have silently adjusted to *Giobbo*, and one that would have revealed the author’s quintessentially eclectic imagination to be oscillating between such disparate (though,

upon reflection, amusingly compatible) archetypes as the proverbially afflicted Job and the dwarfish hunchback of *il Gobbo di Rialto*.

Now let's turn to other portions of the text in which the phrasing a contemporary reader encountered in the 1600 printing of *The Merchant of Venice* would have differed from that to be apprehended by anyone in our own era who comes to the play exclusively through the medium of a representative late 20th- or early 21st-century edition.

In the speech that opens the play in Q1, Anthonio⁸ says

In sooth I know not why I am so sad,
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is borne,
I am to learne.

Here the word that is most likely to elicit our curiosity is *borne*, a form that antedates the distinction we've long made between *borne* and *born*, the two phonemes which descend from it.⁹ Practically all recent editions select the latter in this instance. But surely the expression in which the word occurs could logically be paraphrased either "whence it is born" (i.e., "what gave birth to it") or "by what means it is borne" (i.e., "what there is in my nature which makes me carry, and thereby be susceptible to the influence of, this malady"). If today's reader of *The Merchant of Venice* happens upon an unannotated *born* in this passage, only the first set of possibilities will be available for appropriation. If, on the other hand, that person's initial exposure to Anthonio's meditation is an auditory one (i.e., one that takes place as the sounds the author called for are being executed by performers), he or she may be disposed to wonder whether the merchant means "born" or "borne." I'm persuaded that a vigilant awareness of the potential for ambiguity should continually guide our response to moments such as this. We should remember, whenever we deal with a Shakespearean playscript which has made its way into print, that all of its words were designed to be transmitted through our ears before they were to be taken in as the ink-born(e) alphabetic symbols on a page that we process through our eyes and brains.¹⁰

An apt reminder of the applicability of this principle occurs in I.i.94-98, where Gratiano says

O my *Anthonio* I doe know of these
That therefore onely are reputed wise
For saying nothing; when I am very sure
If they should speake, would almost dam those eares
Which hearing them would call their brothers fooles,
Ile tell thee more of this another time.

In the fourth line of this passage modern editions ordinarily follow the 1685 Fourth Folio and emend *dam* to *damn*. That yields an acceptable meaning, of course, and one that looks forward to the remarks that introduce III.v, where Launcelet tells Jessica that he fears she's doomed to perdition. But in the absence of a helpful note such as the one that Jay Halio includes in his 1993 Oxford World Classics edition¹¹ of the play, this alteration closes off a sense of *dam* (plug up, and thus block, a passage) that is at least equally

suited to the immediate context. Most of today's editions do nothing to alert a reader to the potential for wordplay on the homonyms *dam* and *damn*. Nor do they prepare the way for III.i.31-34, where Solanio's reference to Jessica's "dam" (mother) prompts Shylock to swear that "She is damnd" for her disrespectful behavior.

In the following scene, I.ii, we meet Portia, who tells her "wayting woman" that she is "awearie of this great world." The sympathetic Nerissa replies:

You would be sweet Madam, if your miseries were in the
same aboundance as your good fortunes are: and yet for ought I
see, they are as sicke that surfeite with too much, as they that starue
with nothing; it is no meane happiness therfore to be seated in the
meane, superfluitie comes sooner by white haire, but competen-
cie liues longer.

In this passage, so far as I know, the Guild and Everyman volumes are the only 20th-century editions to retain the Quarto's *aboundance*, which is normally modernized to *abundance*. For most scholars, a tiny disparity between an obsolete form in the control text and the familiar spelling that readers glide by in virtually every current edition appears to be a matter of complete indifference. Inasmuch as *aboundance* would appear to be an option that Shakespeare employed with some frequency, however (it turns up in five of the fourteen instances in which the word occurs in the early printings of his works, a number that includes both of its uses in *2 Henry IV* and two of its four uses in the *Sonnets*), the original texts may indicate either how he customarily pronounced the noun or how he preferred to have it treated in certain dramatic situations. If so, I suspect that his choice in this case was conditioned by a desire to foreshadow the many iterations of *bound*, a word that will acquire considerable thematic resonance, in subsequent portions of *The Merchant of Venice*. *Bound* occurs no fewer than four times in the first twenty lines of the succeeding scene, for example, and seven times more in Acts IV and V.

In their comments on Act I, Scene iii, editors and critics frequently allude to the wit which Shylock puns on *rats*, *rates*, and *pirates* in lines 15-28. But practically no one calls attention to the plangent echo of *curre* (*cur*) in what is undoubtedly the most emotion-packed clause of a memorable indictment:

What should I say to you? Should I not say
Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A curre can lend three thousand ducats? Or
Shall I bend low, and in a bond-mans key
With bated breath, and whispring humbleness
Say this: Faire sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last,
You spurnd me such a day another time,
You calld me dogge: and for these curtesies
Ile lend you thus much moneyes.

Here, of course, the spelling in the original text – *curtesies*, rather than the *courtesies* a reader's eye will encounter in modern editions – makes it easier to discern a relationship that any actor who plays Shylock with insight and sensitivity will want to emphasize with a telling stress upon the bitter ironies of the first syllable.¹²

From this passage let's proceed to others in which First Quarto spellings in *The Merchant of Venice* carry the potential for implications that get excised by today's editorial operations and thus fall prey to the dark backward and abysm of time.

In the speech with which she conducts Arragon to the chamber in which he will make his fatal choice (II.ix. 4-8), Portia says

Behold, there stand the caskets noble Prince,
yf you choose that wherein I am containd
straight shall our nuptiall rights be solemniz'd:
but if you faile, without more speech my Lord
you must be gone from hence immediatly.

Here not only do almost all modern editions change *rights* to *rites*. They do so without acknowledging that in a drama for which legal issues can be matters of life and death, *rights* (contractual provisions and privileges) are at least as important to the heroine's suitors as are the *rites* (ritual ceremonies) by which the victorious competitor's choice will be "solemniz'd" (publicly ratified and celebrated).

Bassanio will be that winning competitor, of course, and it may be worth listening to some of what he says as he meditates upon the caskets in III.ii.74-88:

The world is still deceau'd with ornament
In Law, what plea so tainted and corrupt,
But being season'd with a gracious voyce,
Obscures the show of euill. In religion
What damned error but some sober brow
will bless it, and approue it with a text,
Hiding the grosnes with faire ornament:
There is no voyce¹³ so simple, but assumes
Some marke of vertue on his outward parts;
How many cowards whose harts are all as false
As stayers of sand, weare yet vpon their chins
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
who inward searcht, haue lyuers white as milk,
And these assume but valours excrement
To render them redoubted.

In this speech it is the word *stayers* upon which I wish to focus. With one noteworthy exception (M. M. Mahood's Cambridge text), modern editions invariably substitute *stairs* here. Some point out, while doing so, that *stayers* is a variant spelling of *stairs* that may allude to *stays* in a sense that means "props" or "supports." Professor Mahood defends her decision to retain the Quarto reading by explaining that "A coward's support is unreliable, like an untrustworthy 'stay' or rope in the rigging of a ship."¹⁴ What no one¹⁵ seems to have considered, however (even so judicious a critic as Professor Mahood), is the possibility that *stayers of sand* is a phrase the playwright devised to suggest both (a) "stairs composed of sand" and (b) "cowards" who "stay" away from danger because their valor is as soft, shifting, and insubstantial as "sand."

After Bassanio has selected the proper casket, his friend Gratiano announces (in III.ii.191-208) that he too has been successfully engaged in matrimonial overtures:

For wooing heere vntill I swet again,
and swearing till my very rough was dry
with oathes of loue, at last, if promise last
I got a promise of this fair one heere
to haue her loue: prouided that your fortune
atchiu'd her mistres.

In the second line of this speech the 1619 Second Quarto replaced *rough* with *roof*, and modern editors have traditionally followed suit, occasionally observing while doing so that *rough* is a dialectal form of *roof*. Here again it would seem to be entirely in keeping with Shakespeare's customary practice to adopt a spelling – and thereby encourage, in the actors who would deliver these lines, a pronunciation – that can accomplish a pair of overlapping objectives simultaneously: (a) conjure up an image of the roof of Gratiano's mouth, and (b) convey the texture that that granular surface would have in the “dry” condition he describes when he refers to it.

As Anthonio is being arrested for his failure to comply with the repayment schedule to which he has committed himself, Solanio describes the merchant's enemy as “the most impenitrable curre / that euer kept with men” (III.iii.18-19). Here today's editors silently emend *impenitrable* to *impenetrable*, and those few who indicate the change in their textual collations tend to do so without evincing any awareness of a need to comment on so minuscule a correction. But can we be sure that the spelling in the Second Quarto is not a Shakespearean coinage? To me it has every sign of a nonce-word that combines two contextually relevant senses: (a) so hard-hearted as to be invulnerable to penetration by what the protagonist's Lady calls “the compunctious visitings of Nature” in *Macbeth*, I.v.47, and, as a consequence, (b) incapable of the pangs of guilt and remorse that must be present before a sinner can become a penitent.

In a thematically related passage (IV.i.3-6) at the beginning of the Trial Scene, the Duke tells Anthonio

I am sorry for thee, thou art come to aunswere
a stonie aduersarie, an inhumaine wretch,
vncapable of pittie, voyd, and empty
from any dram of mercie.

Those who come upon these lines in current editions will ordinarily find *inhuman* rather than *inhumaine* or *inhumane* in the phrase which describes the kind of “wretch” a vengeful Shylock has become. Even if they consult the textual notes and collations, they will probably remain uninformed that what a 16th-century audience heard, and inferred from, the Duke's phrasing was almost certainly different from, and more profoundly ominous than, what anyone who hears or reads this passage in our day is likely to extract from a post-Renaissance redaction of it.¹⁶

A bit later in the Trial Scene (IV.i.59-62), Shylock tells the Duke he feels no compulsion to justify his behavior in any manner that will satisfy his victim's advocates.

So can I giue no reason, nor I will not,
more then a lodgd hate, and a certain loathing

I beare *Anthonio*, that I follow thus
 a loosing sute against him? are you aunswered?

Here the word most of us will zoom in upon is *loosing*, another multivalent pre-modern form, and one that can be rendered either “losing” or “loosing.” As one might expect, it is characteristically normalized to *losing* in today’s texts. There can be little doubt that the standard editorial procedure conforms to the intent an imprudent, and increasingly hubristic, speaker expresses. But does it also capture all the proleptic possibilities the playwright wanted those with “judgements in such matters” (*Hamlet*, II.ii.470-71) to register at this moment in a well-conceived production of the play? We have no means of resolving an issue such as this, of course, but it seems vital to recognize that a shift from *loosing* to *losing* erases most, if not all, of the equivocal potential in the original Elizabethan form. It thus shortchanges the audience by eliminating any chance that even the most perceptive observers will foresee that Shylock’s implacable pursuit of Anthonio is likely to lead, not only to the plaintiff’s forfeit of far more than he appears capable of imagining to be at risk, but to his “loosing” (releasing, and thereby setting at liberty to retaliate) a defendant who will eventually be granted an opportunity to exact an excruciating fine from his relentless creditor.¹⁷

When a concerned Bassanio implores “the learned Iudge” to “Wrest once the Law” to his “Authority,” the disguised Portia replies with another statement (IV.i.221-25) which proves susceptible to the kind of “double sence” (*Macbeth*, V.vii.49) that figures so pervasively in other Shakespearean masterworks. “It must not be,” the Trial Scene’s surrogate magistrate insists, because

there is no power in Venice
 can altar a decree established:
 twill be recorded for a precedent,
 and many an errour by the same example
 will rush into the state, it cannot be.

In this instance the intriguing word is *altar*, which the spell-checkers who regulate modern editions automatically replace with *alter*. Once again, the impact of what would seem to be an obvious correction is to give priority to a sense that fits the present context, and surely the sense a clever Portia expects her hearers to assume that her statement is meant to convey. But in the event that a listener has failed to take in what will turn out to be a pertinent homonym, the Quarto spelling makes it accessible to the eye of an attentive reader. Not only does the sound of Portia’s word anticipate Gratiano’s plea that Shylock be granted “A halter gratis” (IV.i.382); it foreshadows the disposition that Anthonio will recommend in the speech that follows, when he asks the Duke to order that Shylock – if he wishes to avoid the penalty he would otherwise be forced to suffer by virtue of “a decree established” – be brought to the altar and there be altered from a Jew to a Christian.¹⁸

Let’s draw this brief survey to a close with a few illustrations of the potential for ambiguity in the letter *I*.¹⁹ Early in the Trial Scene, when “Balthazer” enters to preside as a deputy for “the learnd Bellario,” the resourceful Portia begins by asking the plaintiff and the defendant to identify themselves. After being introduced to Shylock, she turns to Anthonio with the question “You stand within his danger, doe you not,” to which

he replies “I, so he sayes” (IV.i.183-84). Here most of today’s editions substitute *Ay* for the *I* to be found in the early printings. But the more restricted modern sense of “I” – for “[Yes, it is] I” or “I [do]” – could function equally well in this setting.

So also in the fifth line of a later passage (IV.i.286-91) of the same scene, where Bassanio tells his friend,

Anthonio, I am married to a wife
which is as deere to me as life it selfe,
but life it selfe, my wife, and all the world,
are not with me esteemd about thy life.
I would loose all, I sacrificize them all
heere to this deuill, to deliuer you.

The conclusion of this fervent testimony is normally rendered “I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all, / Here to this devil, to deliver you.” But here, as in the instance cited at IV.i.59-62 above, *loose* (release, surrender) is just as relevant as *lose*, and “I sacrifice them all / Here to this devil” yields a reading that is as natural, and at least as sensible, as the one usually found in today’s editions.

In the closing Belmont scene, which transposes the mood of the play’s action to a more conventionally comic key, Nerissa mocks Gratiano’s claim that he gave her bridal ring to “a Iudges Clarke.” No, she says, “Gods my Iudge / the Clarke will nere weare haire ons face that had it.” That exclamation prompts the following couplet (V.i.179-80):

Gra. He will, and if he liue to be a man.
Nerissa. I, if a woman liue to be a man.

Modern editions almost invariably replace *I* with *Ay*. By doing so, they give precedence to the surface potential in Nerissa’s enigmatic utterance, the only sense that Gratiano will have any basis for considering. What the practice of today’s editors will obscure, unfortunately, is the irony an alert audience, cued in to the game the newly returned women are playing, will relish as listeners note that Nerissa’s statement can also mean “I [will], if a woman live to be a man.”

Similar deprivations for today’s readers occur when modern editions change *I* to *Ay* in the dialogue with which Portia and Nerissa draw their second trial scene to its frolicsome consummation in V.i.281-83, 289-90:

Gra. Were you the Clark that is to make me cuckold.
Ner. *I* but the Clarke that neuer meanes to doe it,
vnlesse he liue vntill he be a man.
Por. How now, Lorenzo?
My Clarke hath some good comforts to for you.
Ner. I, and ile giue them him without a fee.

In both of these passages the “I” in Nerissa’s reply will be just as salient a factor in a with-it audience’s full participation in her jest as will the “Ay” that ordinarily supplants the Quarto’s rendering of this sound when *The Merchant of Venice* is reproduced in 20th- and 21st-century editions.

Here as elsewhere, those who experience Shakespeare's dramaturgy solely as readers of modern texts are severely handicapped. They're unequipped to savor all the jokes upon which the final moments of the play depend for their erotic *double entendre*. With insufficient background to enter into the full spirit of the banter that dominates Act V, they're deprived of an ability with analogies to the instrument a bawdy Gratiano knows a male newlywed will sorely need if he pledges to do his part in "keeping safe *Nerissas* ring" (V.i.306-7).²⁰

NOTES

1. The editions examined for purposes of this article include John Russell Brown's text of *The Merchant of Venice* for *The Arden Shakespeare*, general editors Harold F. Brooks and Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen & Co., 1955), Kenneth Myrick's text of *The Merchant of Venice* for *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963), W. Moelwyn Merchant's text of *The Merchant of Venice* for *The New Penguin Shakespeare*, general editors T. J. B. Spencer and Stanley Wells (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1967), Brents Stirling's text of *The Merchant of Venice* for *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, general editor Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), Irving Ribner's *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn and Company, 1971, a revision of the 1936 text by George Lyman Kittredge), G. Blakemore Evans' *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), David Bevington's *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, third edition (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1980), Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor's *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), M. M. Mahood's text of *The Merchant of Venice* for *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, general editor Brian Gibbons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine's text of *The Merchant of Venice* for *The New Folger Library Shakespeare* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), and Jay L. Halio's text of *The Merchant of Venice* for the *Oxford World Classics* set of *The Oxford Shakespeare*, general editor Stanley Wells (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
2. For a more extended discussion of the issues touched upon here, see "Site-Reading Shakespeare's Dramatic Scores," an article (referred to hereafter as "Site-Reading") that I contributed to *Shakespearean Illuminations: Essays in Honor of Marvin Rosenberg*, edited by Jay L. Halio and Hugh Richmond (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp. 183-202. That essay drew heavily upon the research that went into the 16 volumes that have now been completed for *The Everyman Shakespeare*, a paperback set I've been editing since 1993 for J. M. Dent Publishers in London. That collection is an outgrowth of *The Guild Shakespeare* (Garden City, N.Y.: GuildAmerica Books, 1989-92), a 19-volume clothbound collection for the Doubleday Book and Music Clubs.
3. For a discussion of other names in the original texts that have been effectively obliterated in today's editions of Shakespeare – among them Fortinbrasse and Ostricke in *Hamlet*, Mountague in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Weyward/Weyard Sisters in *Macbeth* – see pages 185-86 of "Site-Reading."

4. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from *The Merchant of Venice* are reproduced as they appear in the 1600 First Quarto edition of the play. The line numbers provided are those to be found in my Everyman text (London: J. M. Dent, 1993). I've made no attempt to replicate forms such as the long *s*, but I have retained the Quarto's *u* and *v* characters, its use of italics, and its occasionally anomalous handling of capital and lower-case letters.

5. For this information, as well as for that about the names *Giobbe* and *Gobbo* three paragraphs hence, I'm indebted to the footnotes on page 82 of Molly Mahood's New Cambridge edition of *The Merchant of Venice*. Professor Mahood points out that the Clown's "name is always 'Launcelet' in Q1 (*au* being a typical Shakespearean spelling for nasalised *a*), and usually 'Lancelet' in Q2 and F. 'Lancelot' occurs only once in Q2 (2.2.70), but it is the form throughout Q3" (a post-Folio text that appeared in 1637).

6. Two I[J]/G parallels that may be pertinent to this discussion are the Quarto's *Iem* at II.vii.54 (for "gem"), and its *Iaylor* in III.iii (for an officer who would now be called a "jailer" in the United States and a "gaoler" in Great Britain).

7. Mahood, p. 82.

8. *Anthonio* is the form in which this name appears throughout the First Quarto. In all likelihood it was pronounced either "Ant-hon-io" or "An-ton-io." As evidence we need look no farther than the First Folio text of *Julius Caesar*, which uses *Antony* as its spelling for the same name that is consistently rendered *Anthony* in the play the Folio titles *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Compare *Protheus* (for "Proteus") in the Folio printing of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. We've long known that *noting* and *nothing* were homonyms or near-homonyms; so also with *moth* and *mote*. So how, we may ask, was *Othello* pronounced on the Globe stage? The answer, I suspect, was either "Ot-hel-lo" or "O-tel-lo," as in Giuseppe Verdi's operatic treatment of the tragedy.

9. For a discussion of the importance of retaining *borne* (in a modern edition's notes and commentary, if not in its text) in *Macbeth*, see note 22 in "Site-Reading."

10. See the section on "Recapturing the Ability to Hear with our Eyes" (pages xxvii-xxix) in the Everyman edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, cited in note 4.

11. See page 108, where Halio observes that "Kittredge sees a pun, dam-damn, and in fact follows the Q1-2 spelling (see Collation). The primary sense then = 'cause their hearers to stop up their ears against the foolishness they are hearing.'" In his 1966 revision of Kittredge's text (see the citation in note 1), Irving Ribner retains *dam* too.

12. Anyone who doubts that Shakespeare expected his audiences to pick up on the associations to which Shylock alludes should compare the play on *curs*, *courtesies*, and *curtsies* in the First Folio printing of one of the title figure's last speeches (III.i.35-48) in *Julius Caesar*:

I must preuent thee *Cyber*:
These couchings, and these lowly courtesies
Might fire the blood of ordinary men,

And turne pre-Ordinance, and first Decree,
 Into the lane of Children. Be not fond,
 To thinke that *Caesar* bears such Rebell blood
 That will be thaw'd from the true quality
 With that which melteth Fooles, I meane sweet words,
 Low-crooked-curtsies, and base Spaniell fawning:
 Thy Brother by decree is banished:
 If thou doest bend, and pray, and fawne for him,
 I spurne thee like a Curre out of my way:
 Know, *Caesar* doth not wrong, nor without cause
 Will he be satisfied.

13. Most of today's editions follow the Second Folio (1632) and emend *voyce* to *vice*. But in a note on this passage in his Oxford Shakespeare edition of the play, Jay Halio comments that "'voyce' (like 'smoyle' for *smile* in Q *Lear* 7.80) is apparently an inverted spelling on the analogy of words like *voyage* spelled 'viage', *Hamlet* 3.3.24 (Cercignani, 247)." But why can't *voyce*, which, as Halio implies, is a dialectal form of *vice*, serve here to convey *both* "voice" and "vice"? It was surely employed at this point to echo the same sound five lines earlier in Anthonio's speech. Like its predecessor in *The Guild Shakespeare* (1991), the Everyman edition of *The Merchant of Venice* (1993) prints "Voice," thereby preserving the reading to be found in Q1 (1600), Q2 (1619), and F (1623).

14. Molly Mahood's note on this passage (page 116) begins as follows: "Usually modernised to 'stairs', which is what we hear in the theatre, but an expression similar to Herbert's 'ropes of sands' in 'The Collar' could have been in Shakespeare's mind."

15. I confess to my chagrin that it didn't occur to me to retain *stayers*, or even refer to it in a note, in my Guild and Everyman texts. I hope to remedy these embarrassing oversights in a revised Everyman edition of the play.

16. *Humane* and *inhumane* are the normal Renaissance forms for both of the modern words that branch out from each of them; to be fully *human* or *inhuman*, then, was *ipso facto* to be *humane* or *inhumane*. See the discussion of "too full o'th' Milke of humane kindnesse" on pages 186-87 of "Site-Reading"; also see note 11 of that article.

17. For other instances of "loose/lose," see page 187 of "Site-Reading."

18. Compare the wordplay in Escalus' statement that "my brother Angelo will not be alter'd" in *Measure for Measure*, III.i.504-5, as well as in the Countess' description of the recalcitrant Bertram as an "unbridl'd boy" in *All's Well That Ends Well*, III.ii.30.

19. See my observations about *I/ay* on pages 189-90 of "Site-Reading."

20. These remarks were first presented in an International Shakespeare Conference seminar at the Shakespeare Institute in August of 2002. They then appeared in *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE: New Critical Essays*, edited by John W. Mahon and Ellen Mcleod Mahon (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 165-77.