

Jan B. Gordon

Offered the choice between a postponed consummation today or tomorrow given the tardiness of the hour at which *The Merchant of Venice* concludes, the reader (along with Nerissa) might opt for a “stay” of execution. For the concluding dialogue between Portia and Gratiano suggests, as does the chronology of the Bible, that the Old Law, law, may take precedence over the New Dispensation, love. Yet, most interpretations of Shakespeare’s play read its conclusion as a triumph of love over law, given the prospects of three couples. Having endured one trial that would seem to have restored the heart (and thereby a necessary condition of love) from the clutches of Old Testament covenants and bonds, as it turns out we have no more escaped the blindness of justice than Lancelot Gobbo can permanently escape his blind father, even with the inducement of doves. The law, it would appear, is always with us! For witnesses are about to be called to answer upon oath (“charge us...inter’gatories,”), a series of questions that shall thereby become “sworn.”

Those who thought that the dramatic trial scene of Act IV, concluding with a prolonged verdict and sentence, thereby enabled love to triumph over law, may

have in fact missed the *sententia*. “Cases,” be they of law or love, are not so easily “rested,” to borrow from the language of the law. The play concludes with the exchanged promise of love among three couples, to be sure: a bond of sorts. And yet the play is shadowed throughout by the notion that bonds and covenants are subjected to the bearer being called to “account” by some date that endows the promissory note with its form. We are held to a promise and judged and tried accordingly. And yet, to borrow from the observations of Jean-Luc Nancy, to be so held is to be abandoned to a ban that may resemble the more or less permanent condition in which Shylock, the Jew, lives. If Shylock must convert to Christianity as part of his sentence, then the Christians in some sense also undergo a kind of conversion, albeit beyond the play’s limits. For Nancy, addressing the law,

The destitution of abandoned Being is measured by the limitless severity of the law to which it finds itself exposed. Abandonment does not constitute a subpoena to present oneself before this or that court of law. It is a compulsion to appear absolutely under the law, under the law as such and in its totality. In the same way to be banished amounts not to coming under a provision of the law but rather coming under the entirety of the law. Turned over to the absolute of the law, the abandoned one is abandoned *completely outside its jurisdiction*.¹

The case could be made that Shylock, by virtue of his faith and its commitment to the law, is in a unique ontological position. Given his status as a Jew in a principality in which Jews do not come under the law, he lives as one both obsessed by the Old Testament Law, yet living as a virtual outlaw, “abandoned outside its jurisdiction.” In other words he has a radical love-hate relationship with law, common to Nancy’s “destitution of abandoned Being.” His engagement with the discursive intricacies and exclusions of the law and his disengagement from its actual jurisdictional range, its force, are in opposition. To be sure, Shylock’s tribe differs from other instances of the “banished” heart in Shakespeare—Cordelia and the Romeo dispatched to Mantua after Mercutio’s death come quickly to mind—insofar as he belongs to the *always-already* banished by virtue of what he is rather than what he has done. But the banished in Shakespeare, like Freud’s model of the repressed

or the prodigal son, have a habit of returning (only to be mis-recognized). As the *already* banished, however, Shylock is thereby rendered immune to conventional banishment. By virtue of this curious calculus, Shylock could be banished only by being re-absorbed, integrated into the community from whence he has been excluded. It is his Jewishness that must be and is banished: by the forced re-distribution of his wealth and a mandated conversion to Christianity. From one perspective, Shylock's banishment is synonymous with a radical acceptance.

With this dynamic in mind, could we read the final, supplementary trial of love, already potentially disturbing the lovers' rest at the end of Act V as the return of the Law that had been repressed—put to “rest”—in the more dramatic trial scene of Act IV? This is but another way of saying that there is not one trial scene but two, and that the second tends to perpetuate the force of the law that had seemed to be diminished, by giving it a *durance* that exceeds the formal, i.e., spatial and temporal, limits of *The Merchant of Venice*. The law cannot be put to “rest” any more than the lovers can gain an early rest in Act V, by terminal marriage, but just “keeps on coming” as the promise of a continual procedure or practice. Portia and Nerissa concede that their future husbands are likely plaintiffs, no more satisfied with the alibis that explain their unexpected re-possession of discounted bonds—the golden wedding rings—than Shylock had been with his defaulted bond. Their willingness to convene a supplementary court, to admit to a secondary, albeit invisible “trial” beyond Act V, embodies a recognition, lost on so many critics, that love does not escape the law, nor, as with certain interpretations of the New Testament, abandon it altogether. Everyone is at least potentially, always on trial: “Judge not, that ye be judged”(Matt, 7:1).

Does this suggest that our wedding nights will forever be a trial? John Donne's “The Sun Rising” notwithstanding, lovers—even those on an island like Belmont—cannot apparently make of love a social practice obedient only to its own diurnal movements and laws. Suspicions (and therefore accusations and re-criminations) are the after-life of love as the more than potentially jealous Jessica and Lorenzo, worried about sworn promises, affirm:

Jess:

In such a night

Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one.

Lor: In such a night
Did pretty Jessica (like a little shrew)
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.
(V, i, ll. 17-22)

Surely, it is Shylock's life through the first four acts of *The Merchant of Venice* that prepares us for the unexpected intrusion of the law, or at least the law-as-imaginary, into lovers' bedrooms. Lacking all the rights and privileges of Venetian citizenship, the Jew first discovers the curious extra-territorial "reach" of the law partially as a reflection of his own historical extra-territoriality: his membership in a diaspora that inhibits geographical identification. Like so many Jews before and since, Shylock's very identity as a Jew slips and slides in a rhetorical catachresis. His identity is simultaneously determined as a "sacred nation" (I, iii, l. 24); a "tribe" (I, iii, l.43/52); a belief-system that involved keeping the Sabbath holy and dietary laws; and apparently social practices like the "Jewish gabardine" (I, iii, l. 107) that adorns him. If to be Jewish were merely a matter of his Jewish blood, as he intimates in lamenting Jessica's elopement with a gentile, he would scarcely need the Christian blood of Antonio's heart. The second banishment, ordered by a civil authority, gives the homeless Shylock a home, at the price of his religious extra-territoriality.

All of these admittedly speculative conjectures are made more speculative (in a play one of whose themes is the speculative investment shared by love and commerce as analogously pursued and trafficked treasures) by the fact that we never actually witness a third trial scene, only the residual discourse of the law as anticipated "charges" and sworn "inter'gatories" in the penultimate lines of *The Merchant of Venice*. The danger of literary criticism taking as evidence what is not physically present, but part of some vague, transcendental "the rest," is surely ironic, given the persistence of so many empirically verifiable markers in the play: circumcision, deafness, racial colour, explicitly identifying costumes of suitors. If the second trial exhibits an attachment to legal and executorial instruments like notarized documents and scales for

measurement, the third trial belongs merely to “the rest,” a kind of dramatic extra-territorial residue beyond Act V. Does the law, so tied to verbal precision and vigorous interpretive judgments and enforcement in Act IV, come to constitute a vague “rest” of lovers’ lives, lending those lives—if we pardon the pun—a permanent *restlessness*, at the same time that Shylock “gains” (if it is a gain) assimilation, an end to restlessness?

The Merchant of Venice in fact commences with a similar restlessness--the anxiety of an Antonio concerned about his “futures”-- though unwilling to admit that he is financially in over his head:

Ant: 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 born,
I am to learn:

And such want-wit sadness makes of me,
That I have much ado to know myself.

(*Act I, i, ll.1-7*)

Antonio’s mind, like Shylock’s body, historically, is “tossing on the ocean” (I, i, l. 8) where his argosies sail, subject to fluctuations in maritime conditions and variable prices for the commodities carried. The restlessness is not, we should note, accessible to self-consciousness, but rather recognized by one’s friends as a chronic illness for which there is neither immunity nor easy cure (like being Jewish). This is surely the weariness of the trader whose de-territorialized investment, at home only in vulnerable bottoms, mimes Shylock’s ethnic homelessness. No wonder they are drawn to each other by a bond that exceeds, is even perhaps redundant, with respect to the notarized one.

If Antonio’s restlessness has its origins in the insecurities of the merchant life, it finds a corollary in Bassanio’s sexual insecurities. Having “disabled mine estate”(I, i, l. 123)—squandered his patrimony—in the pursuit of sexual riches,

the ne'er-do-well imagines another pressing investment opportunity on Belmont where a lovely lady, his "golden fleece"(I, i, l. 170), resides. Their respective economic and sexual anxieties are in many ways like those of the literary critic for whom Shakespeare's text is a kind of treasure to be mined and retailed (with an expected added value) for profit and honour. We invest in a particular reading no less than Bassanio in the texts attached to gold, silver, and lead caskets or Antonio in the wind, or price fluctuations as a text to be read. The text worries us and we worry the text, despite the fact that all texts (and winds) are conflicted channels. Unlike lovers and merchant investors, the critic never knows when he has gone astray or foundered on the shifting sands of interpretive fashion. The lover's mart and the merchandise mart are relentless in rejecting the inadequate offer, but texts are silent. There is always "a rest" that alas, gives us no rest, a contradiction well expressed in Macbeth's ironic, "the rest is labor" (*Mac.* I, iv, l.44).

If, "in taking a rest," we have seemed as guilty of a digression that disturbs rest as the three sets of lovers in Act V, we should not forget that Shakespeare was inordinately fond of the same pun. The bawdy Nurse of *Romeo and Juliet*, when apprised of Paris' love suit, jokingly advises her charge, ominously given her long sleep in the tomb, that Juliet should

'Sleep for a week, for the next night, I warrant,
The County Paris hath set up his rest
That you shall rest but little.'
(*RJ* IV, v, ll. 5-8)

And Hamlet's last words, in which he announces that all "the rest is silence" (*H* V, ii, l.358), is so ambiguous, precisely because we are uncertain as to whether "the rest" refers to his death, the termination of the play-within-the-play, or some "remainder" that is resistant to articulation, like the passage of the restless ghost with which the play commenced.

Bassanio's restlessness stems in part from the urgencies of his indebted condition, the need for a means "to come fairly off from the great debts" (I, i, l. 128) now held in more or less perpetual "continuance." His repeated loss of money in pursuit of pleasure suggests the habitual attempt to re-coup losses.

Like the gambler who continually doubles the stake in the hopes of wiping out his debt, Bassanio reminds Antonio, his potential creditor, that the merchant could be the ultimate beneficiary:

Bass: In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight
The self-same way, with more advised watch
To find the other forth, and by adventuring both,
I oft found both:

(I, i, ll. 140-144)

Having lost one arrow, like other gamblers before him, Bassanio shoots another (the rest), the recovery of which would lead him, or so he believes, to the first loss. Like Shylock, the errant arrow is “abandoned to a ban,” a metaphoric condition that enriches the parable. As the first arrow becomes “lost” only by straying from its intended path, so the second or “tracer” arrow would have to be aimed so as not to hit the original target in order to shorten the odds of recovering its mate. It would have to be made *originally* errant, like the Jews. The archer must play to lose, for only by missing the target, can one win, the initial arrow now having become the target. This is an intriguing fugue upon the old capitalist saw, “it takes money to make money” that is also of course a license to lose it. In any case the original game has changed, so that now one only wins by losing! Its rules have an uncanny resemblance to the game that the Jew has played for years: given their historical persecution and near elimination, the Old Testament covenant (bond?) as God’s “chosen” people seems a joke. Were they “chosen” to be banished?

The argument here clearly involves a plea for the “tracer,” the secondary as an instrument of recovery, if not deliverance. If gain is actually loss, then by virtue of this calculus, two losses may result in a double gain, as per Bassanio’s venture. This line of reasoning will come to dominate *The Merchant of Venice* to such an extent that the supplement, the repeated “trace” is not only a structural determinant, but one way of resolving the oppositional values represented by Jewish law on the one hand and Christian love and charity on the other. If our loves and reconciliations are still shadowed by the

demands of justice, then the Old Law is not quite superceded, but enjoys a special relationship with the New Dispensation.

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If this essay seems obsessed with synopes, moments of rest, interruptions that resist articulation, it could well be symptomatic of the extent to which *The Merchant of Venice* presents the viewer with so many characters in a hurry, with no time for rest. The appeal to Shylock for a loan on Bassanio's behalf, so as to take quick advantage of the investment opportunity on Belmont, runs into opposition when the Jew delays a decision in order to prolong reflection:

Shy: Three thousand ducats, *well*.

Bass: Ay sir, for three months.

Shy: For three months, *well*.

Bass: For the which as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

Shy: Antonio shall become bound, *well*.

(I, iii, ll. 1-5, italics added)

Even excusing Shylock's partial deafness (common as *Mark* 8:18, suggests, among those heathen who "have ears and hear not"), the repeated "well"—simultaneously an interrogatory, an interjection, and a conjunction grammatically—delays any ultimate decision. It is an acknowledgment that one has heard with a future expectation that postpones any obligation to reply: an appeal held under advisement.

Shylock further expresses a wish to hear directly from the guarantor, Antonio, rather than the beneficiary, further delaying any final decision regarding the loan. Upon encountering Antonio, Shylock either feigns or has actually forgotten the duration of the loan. Demanding immediate service, Bassanio experiences an exasperating delay, as the Jew reflects, aloud, inducing a "rest" in his potential debtor:

Shy: I am debating of my present store,
And by the near guess of my memory
I cannot instantly raise up the gross

Of full three thousand ducats: what of that?

(I, iii, ll. 48-51)

His present store being insufficient, Shylock must delay so as to obtain the favor of his fellow Hebrew, Tubal. If the opposite of “rest” is eternal readiness, then the Venice of these merchants is sorely lacking *ready* money. All transactions are based on credit that, like marriage bonds, is based on a promise to repay: hence, the privileging of “waiting for the rest,” in the face of infinite regress.

The need to take advantage of the moment is common to both merchants and lovers in an increasingly competitive Mediterranean world where timing is so important. The financing and preparation for Bassanio’s voyage of discovery, no less than for Columbus’ a century earlier, takes place with great haste. Liveries must be purchased, vessels outfitted quickly, gifts bought—all in the name of quickly claiming one’s stake in Portia, whose very name suggests her figurative role as a port of call for rival adventurers of different nationalities. And in Act II the hasty elopement of Shylock’s daughter, Jessica, under the cover of disguise is matched by the urgency with which Bassanio sets sail. If, as Salerio believes, in commenting on lovers’ restlessness,

‘O ten times faster Venus’ pigeons fly
To seal love’s bonds new-made, than they are wont
To keep obliged faith unforfeited,’

(II, vi, ll. 5-7)

then Bassanio is faced with the hasty demands of a strong gale that quickly arises to carry his Cupid’s arrow. Bonds of love and trade are made in a haste that threatens their resistance to later forfeiture.

Antonio, arriving to enjoy a night of masking with the companions who hope to humor him out of his anxieties, suddenly discovers what would-be lovers have long realized—there is no rest:

Ant: Fie, fie Gratiano! Where are all the rest?

‘Tis nine o’clock, our friends all stay for you,--

No masque to-night,--the wind is come about,--
Bassanio presently will go aboard,--
I have sent twenty out to seek for you.
(II, vi, ll. 62-66)

The noise and merry-making that was to have provided an entertaining “rest” from the commercial and sexual business of *The Merchant of Venice*, is inadequate. Instead the masque is the “cover” for the hasty escape of lovers from commercial activity of the city, not at all the antidote that Gratiano and Salerio had proposed when attempting to relieve Antonio of his “tossing” thoughts. As always, he will “miss the rest,” as will the Bassanio who hastily departs for Belmont.

If Antonio and Bassanio have neither the time nor the patience for “rest,” so Portia exhibits a similar behavioral restlessness, but expressed as a weariness, the fatigue of one who cannot escape the provisions of a deceased father’s will. This is narrated, somewhat paradoxically, as a world weariness of a world she has yet to really experience. She can no more escape her indebtedness than Antonio or Bassanio: “by my troth Nerissa, my little body is/ aweary of this world”(I, ii, ll. 1-2). Although she has “good fortunes”(I, ii, l.4), Portia no more has ready access than does Bassanio, Antonio, or Shylock. Abandoned to a ban no less than Shylock by virtue of his Judaism, she is held in bond to her ancestor to such an extent that she “cannot choose one,/ nor refuse none”(I, ii, ll. 25-26), either of which would put her status more or less at rest. In many ways she resembles the Juliet who expresses a similarly unsettling range of marital identities—virgin, newlywed, estranged partner, widow—prior to resolving them in the tomb. This is, to be sure, a unique ontological restlessness.

Like Antonio and Shylock, Portia at least potentially is very rich, although her “surfeit”(I, ii, l. 5) is held in marital escrow in such a way that, though her deceased father cannot choose her husband, he has chosen the means by which her future husband will become “the chosen.” In some sense the dead father holds her heart, to be subjected to a trial for which Shylock’s is the supplement. The situation finds its echo in *Genesis* 22 where the intermittent dialogue between Abraham and God suggests that the understanding of the bargain was

gradual. God tests Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, in a wager like that demanded of candidates for Portia's hand. Generations of Jews and Christians have found the demands of the passage unconscionable, insofar as God's sense of justice seems so contrary to the repudiation of human sacrifice that is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition, most of whose theologians reject the view of Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* that Abraham was a "knight of the faith" who renounced ethical ideals for God's sake. In Kierkegaard's subtle re-reading, we must give to God what we value most—in Abraham's case, his son—with the belief that a just God would not squander the offering. But like those of Shakespeare's play, it is a risky transaction.

And yet, the major trial scene of Act IV—I use the word "major" in the hopes of demonstrating that there is more than one trial scene—has a resonance in God's trial of Abraham. As with Shylock, Abraham came from a legal background wherein it was mandatory to seal a contract or covenant with an animal sacrifice.² The "election" of Abraham and derivatively, his descendants, the Jewish people, as a "chosen people" with dedicated lands (the Land of Israel) is in fact a fragile covenant. The gifts are leasehold, not freehold; though the Jews are chosen, God can "call" his loan at any time:

'And the land is not to be sold in perpetuity, for all land is mine,
because you are strangers and sojourners before me.'

(*Leviticus* 25:23)

In other words, the covenant or bond uniting God to the Jewish people in return for the Promised Land was conditional: the sacrifice of the best-loved remains suspended. If all of man's possessions are really God's to whom we are in thrall, then the Jew lives a perpetual uncertainty, a "stranger" and "sojourner" on the earth. To borrow from the Portia disguised as a legal scholar in Act IV, "there is something else"(IV, i, l. 301).

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Throughout the play, Portia invariably perceives a "something else," the overlooked, from which the other characters remain immune. The "rest" can

only be obtained by contemplation, by resting for a while. In this urge to pause momentarily, she is in direct opposition to Antonio's earlier advice to Bassanio:

Ant: Slubber not business for my sake Bassanio
But stay the very riping of the time.
(II, viii, ll. 39-40)

When Bassanio arrives in Belmont to try his hand at the casket-lottery, he confesses that he lives "upon the rack"(III, ii, l. 25), until given the opportunity to hastily try his luck. This haste is countered, however, by Portia who cautions,

'I pray you tarry, pause a day or two
Before you hazard, for in choosing wrong

I lose your company; therefore forbear a while,--'
(III, ii, ll. 1-3)

As if to retard the hazard even further, she proposes to "detain you here some month or two/Before you venture for me"(III, ii, ll. 9-10) under the assumption that, with delay, she could teach him how to choose correctly. Love apparently takes time. Whereas her other suitors have no advantage of such coaching, soft, rhyming music is heard while Bassanio considers which casket to choose:

*'Tell me where is Fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?'*
(III, ii, ll. 63-65)

Were he listening carefully to the rhyme scheme of the song, Bassanio would have bred "lead" in his head, and for all we know, this subliminal message may have impacted his choice. He must read and listen to what is simultaneously there and not there.

In many ways, the trial of the casket prepares the attentive playgoer for Portia's more obtrusive appearance in the second trial scene of Act IV, where she again impedes the letter of the law, not by finding its spirit, but a conflict in a secondary "letter" implicit in the law's intention. As a disguised legal scholar, she initially finds that the provisions of the bond entirely support Shylock's claims, and that justice must prevail, albeit a very deliberative justice, until she suddenly pauses, takes a rest, to consider the "rest."

'Soft!

The Jew shall have all justice,--soft no haste!

He shall have nothing but the penalty.'

(IV, i, ll. 316-318)

Her judicial finding depends upon a connection between the (Christian) heart and (Jewish) blood that has escaped the parties to the bond. Because the pound of flesh cannot be exacted without shedding Christian blood—a violation of Venetian law that applies to the banished Shylock precisely because or as a condition of his ban from the protection of its other laws—the bond is not so much rendered invalid as it is placed in conflict with itself. One cannot exact punishment without violating another law, an argument not lost on those who campaign against capital punishment. There is always "something else"(IV, i, l. 301) because the law is as interdependent upon other laws and their legal precedents as are the network of organs and the function of the body. One can no more separate one law from another than the heart could be separated from the body without shedding blood.

This analogous model of legal and physiological interdependence presumably has its implicit religious corollary in *The Merchant of Venice*: Jews and Christians cannot be so easily kept apart, as the elopement of Jessica with Lorenzo intimates. The "rest," Portia's characteristic tarrying, from another perspective, is the recurrent residue or surfeit, the "scruple" (IV, i, l. 326) or "estimation of a hair"(IV, i, l. 327) that always tips the scales of justice no matter how scrupulously we strive for balance. An "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is an inadequate model for justice because there is always something left over, the rest, to ground a new round of revenge.

If one law is connected to another that is in turn connected to still others, we could never fully escape the law, even when our obligations appear to have been fulfilled. That characteristic of the operational dynamics of the law does not exempt the Jew, who, Shakespeare reminds us, gave us the law. Because its force seems so relentlessly continuous, the law itself seems to spawn the supplement. There is not one arrow, but two for Bassanio. The bond is not really his “singular bond”(I, iii, l. 141) as Shylock would have it, but the first of two bonds, for in the play’s final act Antonio must come forth again as a guarantor, to lovers who treated their love bonds (bands) so lightly as to give them away:

Ant: I once did once lend my body for his wealth,
Which but for him who had your husband’s ring
Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith advisedly.

(V, i. ll. 249-253)

There are two trials involving hearts in Acts III and IV, and it is the argument of this essay that there is an equally significant, albeit invisible, trial beyond the final curtain.

If Christian charity and forgiveness (the supplement of a second chance?) seems to have triumphed in Act V, we too must take Portia’s advice and tarry a bit, re-reading, as she urged upon Bassanio. Though Shylock and his Jewish identity have disappeared as a physical presence by virtue of his forced conversion, the values embodied in the distribution of justice under law persist. The anticipated interrogatories and sworn witnesses (V, ii, l. 302, 303) mentioned by Portia, hint at a third, supplementary trial during which judgment will be rendered regarding the displaced wedding rings, discounted as a gratuity presented as a mere token for favorable judgment.

The questioning upon oath that threatens the wedding night bliss of these lovers assembled on Belmont is both necessary and crucial to *The Merchant of Venice* for the procedure suggests the survival of Jewish values into the new

(dawning) order of love and forgiveness, the symbolic domain of the New Testament that the play seems to inaugurate. Even under the New Dispensation, a faith of love, we must re-dedicate ourselves to the bond and remain under the yoke of potential judgment. God's gift of the land(s)—now Israel—to Abraham was a conditional gift that could be withdrawn in the event of disobedience, as in fact repeatedly happened in Jewish history. As if the fate of the Temple Mount were mirrored in Belmont, the gift of love is indeed a restless paradise. Was Shakespeare attempting to relate the Covenant of Abraham, with its bond and aborted sacrifice, a pact mentioned by Shylock, to a second, supplementary covenant entered into freely by lovers who promise to love, cherish, and obey? Is all love not merely founded upon, but renewed by another antecedent Covenant, upon which it is modeled? We must never forget that without Shylock's bond and its threat to the heart, there would have been no meeting of hearts in Act V, suggesting that the love between God and man is a necessary antecedent of the covenant uniting man and woman.

The Jews, traditionally wary of identifying a "place" of transcendence, as the Christians do their heaven, often substitute a metaphor familiar to every attendant at a synagogue: "someday in Israel." The land thus became, in metaphor or geography, the paradise of wandering tribes, the Diaspora. If the New Testament equivalent were the various joyful marriages—at Cana or in the Mass of the Angels—then the "coming together in marriage" with which Shakespeare's play ends is a kind of communal paradise. But it is a paradise that will always remain open to trials and tribulations. It would be a paradise with, as the Yiddish would have it, *tsouris*: the rest of the banished.

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To continue our critical speculation beyond the formal limits of a critical essay is surely to "hedge" one's bets by "going long," to borrow from the parlance of investment finance. If indeed there is to be a third trial for all lovers, any judgment would be beyond the dramatic, the performative resonance of the first two trials with their elaborately exaggerated ethnic costumes on the one hand and the disguised sexuality that cloaks identity, on the other. Although Shakespeare's penchant for meta-theatre—illustrated in the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet*, the staged banquet scene in *Macbeth*, or Prospero's diorama of

pagan deities in Act IV of *The Tempest*—has long been the subject of critical inquiry, a play-outside-the-play presents critical problems. For it would be a play banished beyond the wedding bans (bands, bonds?), the formal termination of dramatic as well as legal limits. Would such a play suggest that everyday justice, the faithfulness demanded of jealous lovers, can never be staged, only lived? Or, do the lines that furnish the epigraph for this essay open the potential for a “supplementary performance,” like Bassanio’s “tracer” arrow? This supplement is simultaneously dramatically present and absent, not unlike the infinite potential of the announcement in *Hamlet*, “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.”

NOTES

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1 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth of Presence*, trans. Britain Holmes (Stanford, CA.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 149-150, italics added.

2 Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), especially pp. 16-20.