

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.- SHYLOCK'S MONOLOGUE

PLOT: In Act I, Scene 3 of the movie scene, Bassanio (Jeremy Irons) comes to Shylock (Al Pacino) asking for a loan for which his good friend Antonio (Joseph Fiennes) will be indebted. In the film, Bassanio meets Shylock in a bustling marketplace while Shylock is shopping for food.

Foreshadowing in Merchant of Venice

Once Shylock is told that Antonio will be in debt to him, he goes on the recite lines from Shakespeare play while buying a pound of meat from a merchant. The meat is cut while Shylock talks of Antonio's ships and goods and possible inability to pay back the loan, then it is placed on a scale and matched with a one pound weight. This act could be seen as subtle and not noteworthy if the audience had never read the play. It looks like two men discussing business while one is shopping and not a foreshadow of the agreement to come.

Al Pacino Portrays a Softer Shylock

Once Shylock pays the merchant, Antonio arrives by gondola and Bassanio goes to meet him. Shylock's original soliloquy here is cut dramatically in the film. Shylock only grimaces and mutters a few inaudible lines of disgust about Antonio before the pair return to him. Without this soliloquy Shylock seems much less sinister than in the play.

Shylock Not So Vengeful in Radford's Script

Once Bassanio brings Antonio to Shylock, the trio exits the marketplace and enters Shylock's home. Shylock sets the pound of meat on the desk after agreeing to the bond. So far the script is followed fairly closely; however Bassanio sits down close to Shylock while Antonio paces Shylock's room. **Al Pacino's Shylock More "Humanized"**

Shylock looks over the interest numbers then looks at his pound of meat. It's as if the idea of some kind of revenge comes to him right at this moment, instead of him plotting it since the beginning of his conversation with Bassanio as in the play. At this moment Shylock goes on to give Antonio a speech including instances of anti-Semitism from Antonio. After this speech, Antonio responds with anger, not comedy as is insinuated in the play, stating that Shylock would get more joy out of exacting penalty from an enemy than a friend. One gets the sense that Shylock is old and has dealt with an unfair amount of hassle during his life as a Jew.

Clearly Michael Radford didn't want to villainize Shylock as much as Shakespeare. His point was to give Shylock a more humane portrayal throughout the film.

MAN: And then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam.

SHYLOCK: She be damned for it.

MAN: Tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

SHYLOCK : Let him look to his bond.

MAN: I'm sure if he forfeit you'll not take his flesh. What's that good for?

SHYLOCK: To bait fish withal. If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies, and what's his reason?--I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge.

The villany you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.