

Shakespeare 1564-1616 & The Renaissance



Comedies: eg. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1595
Tragi/Comedies: eg *The Merchant of Venice* 1596
British Histories: eg *Henry the Fifth* 1598
Classical Histories: eg *Anthony & Cleopatra* 1606
Tragedies: eg *King Lear* 1605 , *Othello* 1604
Romance: eg *The Tempest* 1611

The World of Shakespeare



Sir Philip Sidney



Christopher Marlowe



Aemilia Lanyer



Castiglione



Sir Thomas Hoby



Sir Walter Raleigh & Son



Sir Thomas Wyatt



Chandos and Droeshout portraits

New Portrait Discovered 2009

1564-1616

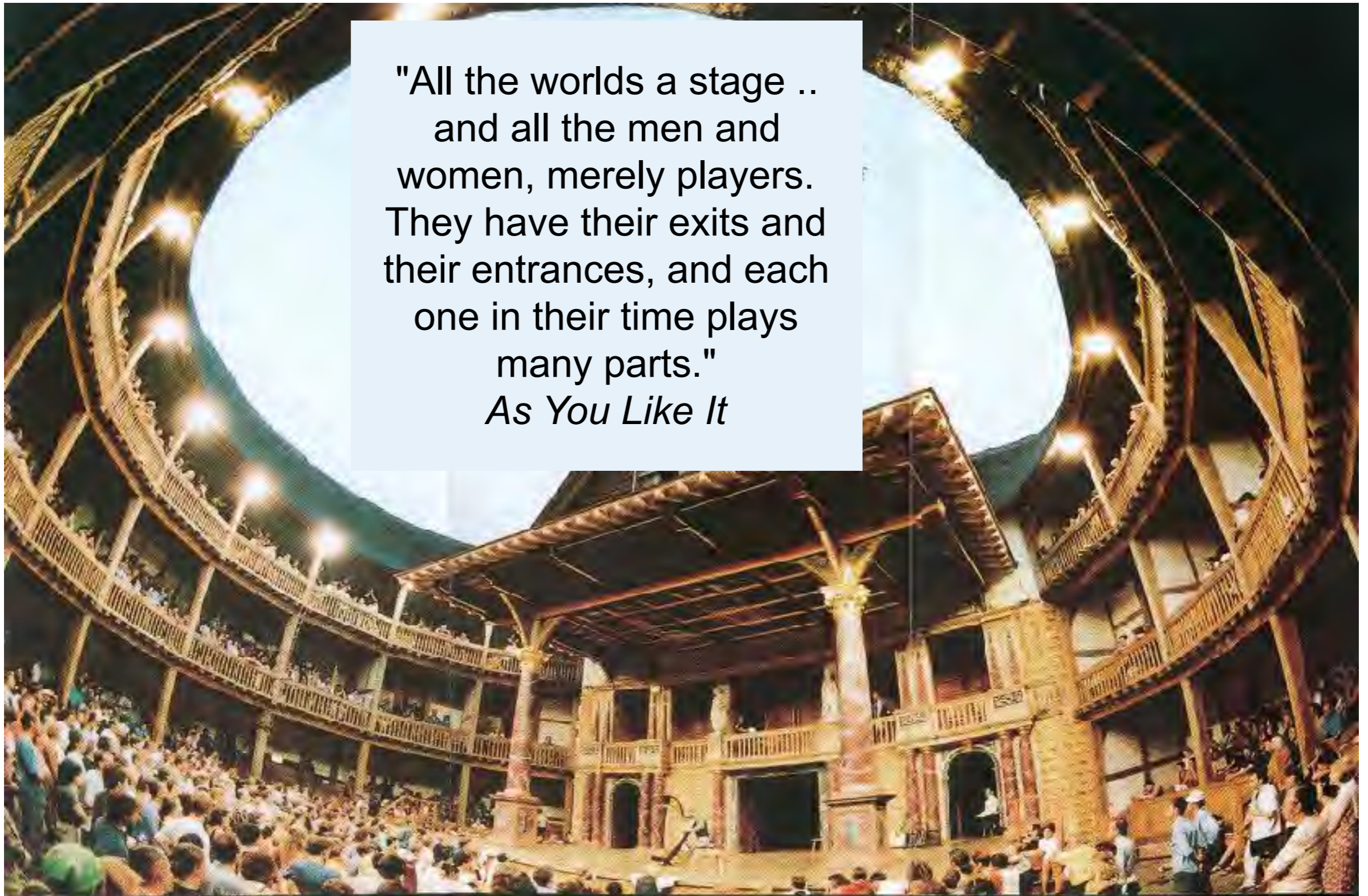


Will. Shakespeare



“We need not repine at [worry about] the lack of a satisfactory Shakespeare portrait. To see his face, we need only look in a mirror. He is ourselves, ordinary suffering humanity, fired by moderate ambitions, concerned with money, the victim of desire, all too mortal. To his back, like a hump, was strapped a miraculous but somehow irrelevant talent. It is a talent which, more than any other that the world has seen, reconciles us to being human beings, unsatisfactory hybrids, not good enough for gods, and not good enough for animals. We are all **Will.** Shakespeare is the name of one of our redeemers.” Anthony Burgess, *William Shakespeare*.

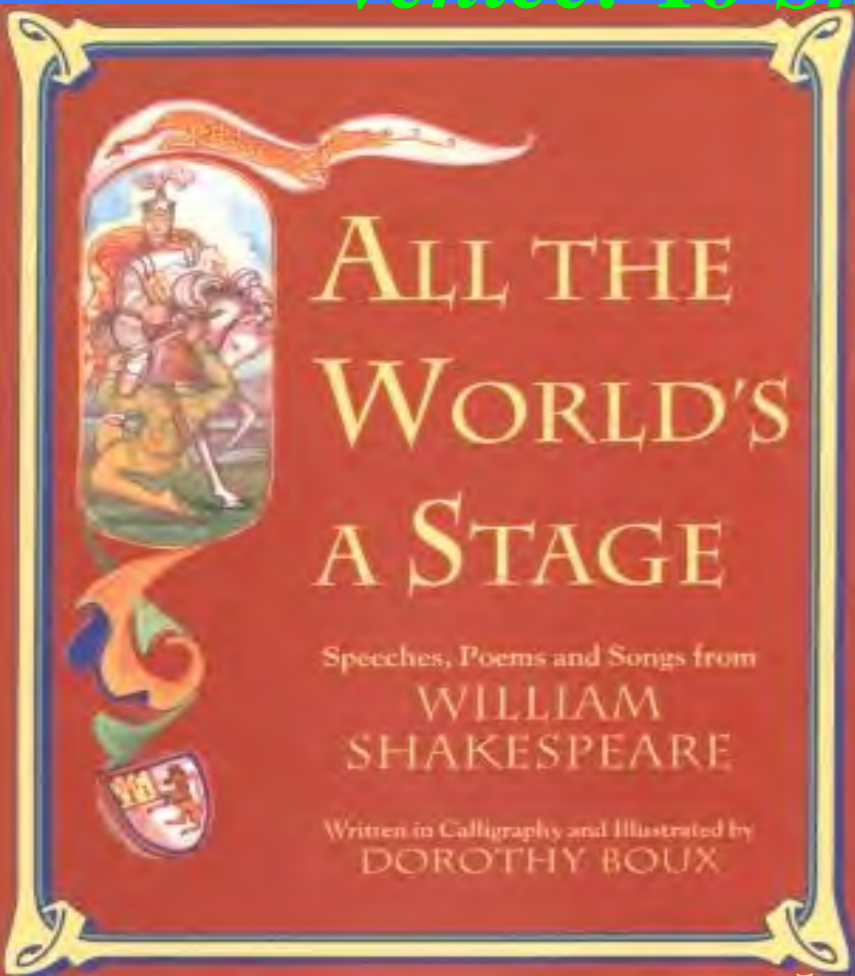
"All the worlds a stage ..
and all the men and
women, merely players.
They have their exits and
their entrances, and each
one in their time plays
many parts."
As You Like It







The underlying motivation for *The Merchant of Venice*: To Shed Light on Human Nature and Expose the Injustices of the World



Shakespeare's As You Like It, 1600:

JAKUES:

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts...*

Twelfth Night ... [Halloween](#). The [Lord of Misrule](#) symbolizes the world turning upside down. The common theme was that the normal order of things was reversed. This [Lord of Misrule](#) tradition dates back to pre-1500.

Powerful Ideas in the Sonnets

Shakespeare the lover of “disreputable” women?

- Sonnet 130: “My mistress’ eyes....”



See Thomas Campion “There is a garden in her face”



Challenging Ideas in the Sonnets

MY MISTRESS' EYES ARE NOTHING LIKE THE SUN

by William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

THERE IS A GARDEN IN HER FACE.
by Thomas Campion.

There is a Garden in her face,
Where Roses and white Lillies grow ;
A heau'nly paradise is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits doe flow.
There Cherries grow, which none may buy
Till Cherry ripe themselues doe cry.

Those Cherries fayrely doe enclose
Of Orient Pearle a double row ;
Which when her louely laughter showes,
They look like Rose-buds fill'd with snow.
Yet them nor Peere nor Prince can buy,
Till Cherry ripe themselues doe cry.

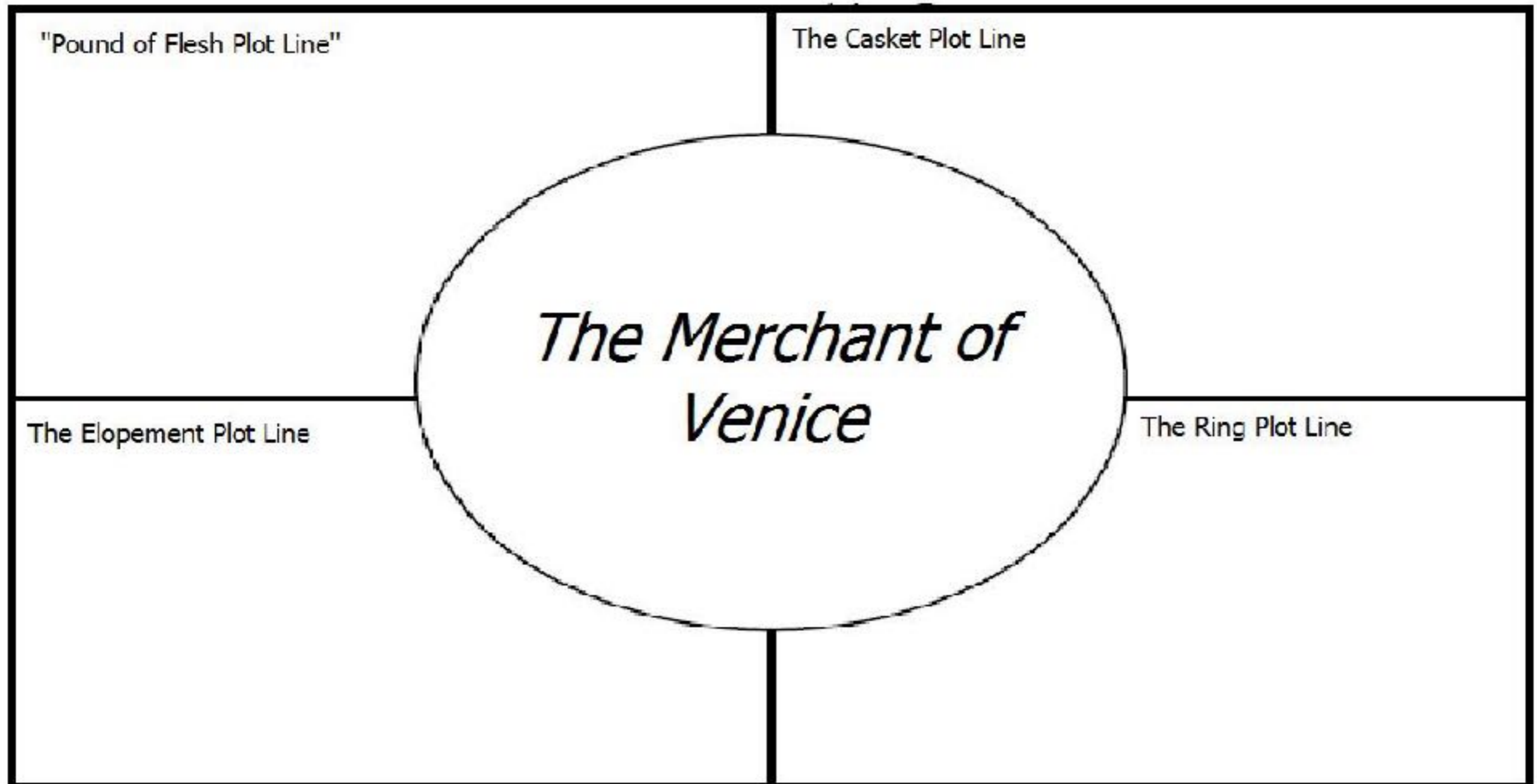
Her Eyes like Angels watch them still ;
Her Browes like bended bowes doe stand,
Threatning with piercing frownes to kill
All that attempt with eye or hand
Those sacred Cherries to come nigh,
Till Cherry ripe themselues doe cry.



A Muse of Fire



Track the 4 Plot Strands in the Play



PLOT

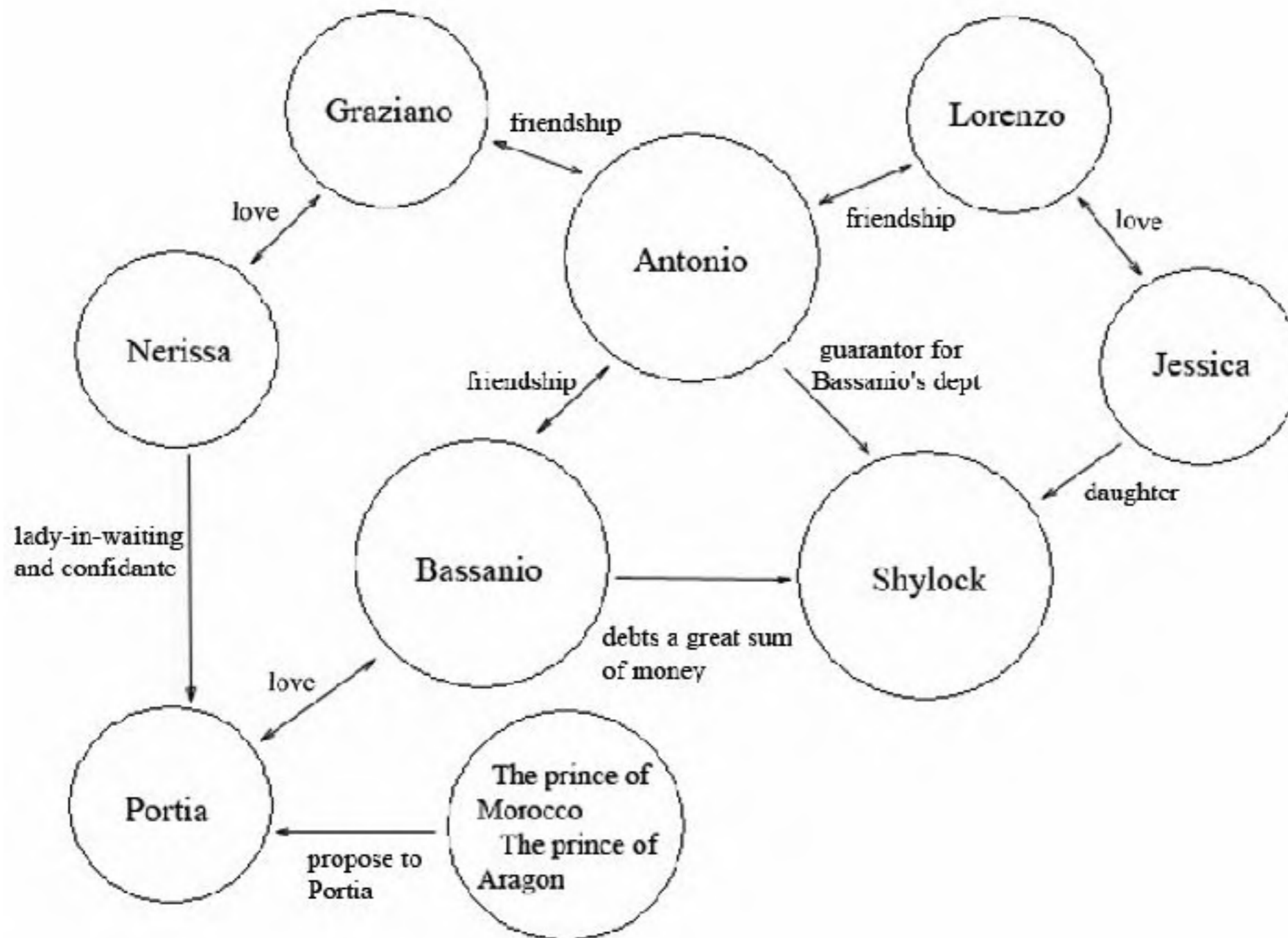
- Bassanio asks his friend Antonio for money to woo a rich lady in Belmont
- Antonio gets the money from Shylock, a Jewish Money lender entering into a contract or bond, to take his flesh if the money is not repaid on time.
- Portia from Belmont has been bound to a marriage casket challenge. She is faced with suitors from around the world. The Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon fail this challenge.
- Shylock's daughter Jessica is in love with a Christian, Lorenzo. She leaves her father taking his money and treasures to be with Lorenzo
- Shylock's servant Gobbo also wants to leave Shylock. After being reunited with his father, Old Gobbo, he goes to work for Bassanio.
- Bassanio travels to Belmont. He wins the marriage challenge and Portia's love. Meanwhile Gratiano and Portia's servant, Nerissa have also fallen in love.
- Portia hears of Antonio's bond and travels to Venice to represent Antonio in court. She is in disguise with Nerissa. She wins, leaving Shylock forced to become Christian and giving his money to Jessica and Lorenzo. He is broken.
- The group are reunited in Belmont. Bassanio and Antonio learn of the plot and Antonio hears that his ships have returned safely home.

Mercy vs Justice

The conflict between Shylock and the Christian characters centers around mercy. The other characters acknowledge that the law is on Shylock's side, but they all expect him to show mercy, which he refuses to do. When, during the trial, Shylock asks Portia what could possibly force him to be merciful, Portia's long reply, beginning with the words, "The quality of mercy is not strained," explains that human beings should be merciful because God is merciful: mercy is an attribute of God himself and therefore greater than power, majesty, or law.

Shylock, on the other hand, is not capable of showing mercy towards Antonio. He insists on the letter of the bond, asking for a pound of flesh from Antonio's body. He calls for justice and repeats the word as his slogan.

Shylock says that Christians pretend to be merciful, but they actually are not. He says that he has learned the lesson on revenge and intolerance from them. Shylock gives many examples on how mercy has never been shown to him by Christians. By the end of the trial, Portia, in spite of her speech about mercy, does not show any mercy towards Shylock.



The Merchant of Venice (c. 1595)

Christian
Venice

Jewish
Venice

Belmont

Groups of male
friends

Ghetto of
tolerated aliens

Fairy-tale world
of romance

