

Exercise #4

due this Friday; no rewrites!

1. Get inside this transitional, trade-depot culture, and, using the positions outlined in class today, identify the economic "direction" which the play's protagonists are taking? That is, decide whether their economic practices are transactions of growth, decline, stagnation, or something more complicated?

2. And then answer one of the following:

(a) Explain why these protagonists, having chosen such a "direction," go so far out of their way to humiliate and destroy a Jew? Why, that is, is anti-Semitism an inevitable and necessary aspect of the economy they construct? Get beyond the obvious fact that they want Shylock's money?

(b) Why does the sort of transitional economy which they set up employ a 3 casket lottery method of marrying off Portia? Ignore what the caskets say, and what is inside them, and think about the function this lottery serves within this economic-cultural construct.

(c) Why is the particular transitional economy they construct so sexist? Why do the Christian men in this play, like Shylock, have to equate women with money? Why do they have to think of women as money, and, more importantly, of money as female?