



## Evil is the Root of All Money: Performing Usury and Homosocial Credit in Elizabethan/Jacobean England

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### Abstract:

Performing Usury and Homosocial Credit in Elizabethan/Jacobean England.

Elizabethan and Jacobean usury plays bear witness to an evolving sensibility regarding usury, money and social relations surrounding the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. A survey of plays reveals a tendency to vilify the usurer in an increasingly comic way until he becomes a trope or stock character-type void of any deep critical characterization. However, framing the cycle of plays are *The Merchant of Venice* circa 1597 and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* in 1625. These two plays present a higher level of tension or anxiety in the characterization and plight of the usurer in less comic terms than many of the plays with which they were contemporary. The monetary commerce of the usurer is polarized against a network of homosocial credit which the usurer is barred from entering in a binary opposition. There seems to be an anxiety that monetary increase poses a threat to the aristocratic birthright. It only makes sense then, that the all-male playing companies would portray any threat to the necessary social trade-trust in a negative light. Of particular interest is the larger number of asides in the so-called usury plays, both marked and apparent, which are clearly aimed at the audience and act to gain complicity with a largely plebian audience for an aristocratic homosocial sensibility that requires all levels of society to participate in order to defend itself. If the exchange of money and social credit are closely followed in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Timon of Athens*, and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, homosocial credit is aligned with virtue while monetary credit is depicted as a rising threat worthy of risibility or punishment.

Elizabethan and Jacobean usury plays bear witness to an evolving sensibility regarding usury, money, and social relations. A survey of plays reveals a tendency to vilify the usurer in an increasingly comic way until he becomes a trope or stock character-type void of any deep critical characterization. Framing the cycle of plays are Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* circa 1597 and Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* in 1625. These two plays present a higher level of tension or anxiety in the characterization and plight of the usurer in less comic terms than many of the plays with which they were

contemporary. According to contemporary cultural theorist (and Shakespeare aficionado) Slavoj Žižek,

It was no accident that Shakespeare was so attentive to these paradoxes of 'something begot by nothing' (the same problem lies at the very heart of *King Lear*), for he lived in a period of the rapid dissolution of precapitalist social relations and of the lively emergence of the elements of capitalism, i. e. , in a period when he was able daily to observe the way a reference to 'nothing,'

to some pure semblance (speculating with 'worthless' paper money that it is only at 'promise' of itself as 'real' money, for example), triggers the enormous machinery of a production process that changes the very surface of the earth. Hence Shakespeare's sensitivity to the paradoxical power of money which converts everything into its opposite, procures legs for a cripple, makes a handsome man out of a freak, etc. – all those memorable lines from *Timon of Athens* quoted again and again by Marx. Lacan was well justified in modelling his notion of surplus enjoyment (*plus-de-jouir*) on the Marxian Notion of surplus value (Žižek "Reality to Real" 339-40).

More specifically, the monetary commerce of the usurer in these plays is polarized against a network of homosocial credit which the usurer is barred from entering in a binary opposition. There seems to be an anxiety that monetary increase poses a threat to the aristocratic birthright. If the exchange of money and social credit are closely followed in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Timon of Athens*, and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, homosocial credit is aligned with virtue while monetary credit is depicted as a rising threat worthy of risibility or punishment.

The social and credit economy of early modern England was suffering from a lingering sensibility of the medieval guild. In his essay, *Interpreting the market: the ethics of credit and community relations in early modern England*, Craig Muldrew states that "In general, early modern markets constituted a moral economy" (Muldrew 169). Furthermore, the biblical perspective of usury put it in direct conflict with an underlying moral sensibility. Moral sensibilities were vast and various. Certainly the mercantile playing companies were dependent upon, and paid regular homage to an aristocratic benefactor clearly visible in the dedicatory epistles published at the beginning of most plays. These benefactors were almost certainly participants in the male-oriented homosocial economy of the gentry. It only makes sense then, that the all-male playing companies would

portray any threat to the necessary social trade-trust in a negative light. Muldrew further clear that "The linguistic distinction between economic and social credit had not yet arisen" (Muldrew 177). They had not been distinguished because they were the same thing. As we see in the plays, there is no distinction made, in any example, between social credit and economic credit. Even the vile usurer Barabas in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* uses his reputation to secure credit at the beginning of the play. Economic and social credit function as a singular phenomenon within the mutually social and economic dynamics of the plays. Muldrew states, "Almost all ... marketing and trade was done on credit" (Muldrew 171) and "to be a creditor in an economic sense still had a strong ethical meaning" (Muldrew 177). Both Shylock and Overreach have what were considered unethical motives: one to kill Antonio (an established member of the homosocial gentry), the other to exact interest and to purchase an elevated social station.

There is a negative stigma attached to the exchange of physical 'cash' (especially by usurers) that is reflected in the plays. "The amount of actual gold and silver currency in circulation in the early modern period was small, and full and direct payment in cash was unusual except in the smallest transactions, or in cases where the buyer's credit was weak or unknown" (Muldrew 171). In *Merchant*, "Antonio's bond with Bassanio renders economic rationalization invisible. It is instead based in a quintessentially Christian ethos--one of faith rather than the cold logic of economic calculation" (Rich 28). Antonio's bond is only "constitutively economic" based on a social fraternity. Members see no exchange of money nor gain profit from a mutual member. Shylock depicts his offer of a bond to Antonio, after Antonio's otherwise deplorable treatment of Shylock, as the extension of friendship. Aside from the ethnic delineations that Shakespeare presents to classify Shylock as an 'other', it is the offer of calculated cash, especially at interest, that bars Shylock from entering the network of friendship. By the end of the play he has replaced the debt of money with that of Antonio's flesh. However, where Bassanio desires the living flesh of Antonio's personality, Shylock wishes for the dead flesh of his person.

But it is curious that no money ever changes hands between Antonio and Bassanio. Antonio offers only his reputation. “Try what my credit can in Venice do” (1. 1. 179). He openly states that the credit he offers is based on a trust with his creditors and extended to Bassanio. “Where money is and I no question make / To have it of my trust or for my sake” (1. 1. 183). Are we to assume then that in the homosocial society in which they lived, there was no other place to turn for cash except the usurer? It is more likely that the usurer was introduced as a structural convenience for the plot to specifically explore the social/monetary dynamic and delineate the money-lender as a clear antagonist. In *The*

*Merchant of Venice*, for example, much is made of Shylock’s Jewishness, an easy contemporary scapegoat, and it is flagged obviously in the play through both religious allusion and its contrast against Christianity. Conversely, in *Englishmen for my Money*, for example, which was staged in 1598, not much is made of the usurer Pisaro’s ethnicity and he is simply identified as a “Portingale”. While Pisaro is *not* a vividly identified ethnic other, he is nevertheless a merchant and a usurer. Evidently, the sensibility towards usury was evolving. Usury was slowly being integrated to the economy of the day even if it was excluded from the homosocial gentry’s sensibility of virtue.

Play:	Date:	Depiction of Usurer:
<i>Three Ladies of London</i>	1581	severely anti-usury
<i>Jew of Malta</i>	1592	horribly vile / ‘just’ ending
<b><i>Merchant of Venice</i></b>	1596-7	locus of anxiety but ambiguously sympathetic
<i>Englishmen for my Money</i>	1598	comic trope / comic ending
<i>Eastward Ho!</i>	1605	highly comic trope
<i>Trick to Catch the Old One</i>	1605-7	comic trope with a severe ending for the usurer
<b><i>Timon of Athens</i></b>	1607-9	misanthrope against the gentry / gift-giving is obsolete / usury is peripheral
<i>Hog Hath Lost His Pearl</i>	1613	comic trope
<i>A Woman Never Vex’t</i>	1614-15	almost irrelevant / severe ending for the non-homosocial
<i>Rule a Wife and Have a Wife</i>	1624	comic trope / severe ending for usurer
<b><i>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</i></b>	1625	return to severe anti-usury / ‘writing’s on the wall’ for the gentry

By the time *Timon of Athens* was staged circa 1609, a new set of observations had emerged as the homosocial order grappled with ongoing changes in the financial economy. Alcibiades represents perhaps the strongest evidence of homosocial credit. In the trial of his fellow soldier, he states, “I’ll pawn my victories, all my honour to you / Upon his good returns” (3. 6. 80). He asks for no money to change hands but calls for a return of favour within the homosocial credit structure. He is willing to forfeit their debt to him for his worthy service. When he is denied, the fall of the city becomes imminent.

The homosocial brotherhood within the gentry needed usury and the system of friendship modified its rules to accommodate the new necessary evil. *Timon* editorializes severely on the decline and loss of the homosocial credit

system, and its severe effect on those who still trust in it. Timon gave too much away within the system for free, while paying interest for it at the other end. Eventually, his debts overwhelmed his generosity. Timon ends up entirely removed from all society, having squandered his membership in both the internal system of generosity and the external system of usury, and he is never returned to it. Reflecting the changing social sensibility, *Timon* observes that a lack of money will surely get one kicked out of the homosocial brotherhood, but seeking money (in the form of charity), will not get you back in. Apparently, generosity within the brotherhood at a peer level was a tenet that only held if it was not charitable. John Jowett, in his article *Middleton and Debt in Timon of Athens*, focused on the “representations of money” as affected by collaborative authorship (Jowett 219). However,

he incidentally provides some relevant comment to the argument at hand. “[T]he scenes Middleton wrote do not simply represent the networks of credit and trust that Muldrew describes; they show those networks in a disturbing state of collapse” (Jowett 219), which would be all the more reason for the homosocial gentry to react with defensive panic.

For example, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* reflects a fear of financially purchasing membership into the gentry, a practice from which King James profited to offset his mounting debts. As in *Merchant*, in Massinger’s *A New Way*, the rules of favour exchange exercised by Welborne within the homosocial order exclude cash. Often *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is touted as a misnomer because the use of social credit by Welborne is actually an old methodology in a play that comes towards the end of the heightened usury discourse. By the time it was staged, however, the increasingly laissez-faire attitude to usury had those loyal to an archaic system feeling genuinely uncomfortable. Michael Neill, among several critics, touts *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* as the violently defensive manifestation of an author (Massinger) culturally and emotionally loyal to the hierarchy of the gentry. In his essay *Massinger’s Patriarchy: The Social Vision of A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, Neill states that “Massinger, though he came of minor gentry, was born into service” (Neill 188). Ironically, Shakespeare seems to have worked his way into the gentry, but through hard sales of his stagecraft, not by usury (although a colleague has recently informed me that it is likely Shakespeare likely practiced usury himself, it was not the means by which he entered the gentry, and only acts to strengthen my argument that Shakespeare saw the usurer as more complicated than simply evil). If these two individuals take up the cause of the gentry, then clearly the sensibility of noble birthright and the proud arrogance assigned to hoarding your way in with usury was ubiquitous.

In *A New Way*, the boundary between the usurer and the honourable gentry is most boldly drawn. Welborne refuses the offers of money from Tapwell (if he becomes an overseer of the poor), Allworth, the Lady Allworth,

and Marrall. He seems to refuse to enter the commerce of social credit, but remains within the context of charity and gentry delineated in *Timon*. The trajectory of charity can only go down the social hierarchy. Once this dynamic is compromised there is no hope of returning to the ostensibly superior homosocial order of the gentry. Overreach is clearly outside of it and willing to pawn his honour to avarice as a matter of religion. Welborne shows patterns that are distinctly opposite to *Timon*. Where *Timon* gives all of his wealth away in generosity, it appears that Welborne lost it all in bad debts and drinking. Where *Timon* is refused credit in his hour of need, Welborne refuses charity in his. The delineation of social credit and financial credit in the play is specific. No money passes between peer members of the gentry.

But Muldrew claims that in the face of financial conflict, peers would step “in to solve differences and to keep the peace when loans were disputed or unpaid” (Muldrew 179). Muldrew provides reasons that Welborne could not accept charity. Muldrew specifically uses the word “solve”, and not the word ‘pay’. There is no evidence that paying a peer’s debts was appropriate or a part of the understood homosocial order, at least not by giving them cash to do so – perhaps in cash on their behalf. In order to re-enter the homosocial economy, Welborne can allow his friends to help solve his insolvency but not with cash. It is obviously important to Massinger that Welborne remain a peer in his social standing with the aristocrats who will become his peers. Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* is another powerful example of the usurer’s inability to enter any homosocial order. After having acted against it by orchestrating the duel between Don Lodowick and Don Mathias, he attempts to create a bond between himself and Ithamore. However, like Shylock and Tubal in *Merchant*, they are denied the fruits of such a pact perhaps because they are Jews or usurers, but certainly because they are both avaricious and treacherous. As a depiction of usury, Barabas is problematic because he does not actually practice any usury in the play. He mentions, with villainous relish, the plight of those that have suffered at the hands of his interest, but these anecdotes represent the plot’s past. He is

already evil at the beginning of the play because he is already a Jew and a usurer. Moreover, he is most certainly the lead character and the play seems to align more closely with Shakespeare's *Othello* in this way. That is to say that both plays place an unforgivable villain in the lead role, both of whom are depicted as irrationally and irredeemably avaricious, jealous, and vile.

These plays, especially *A New Way* preconceive a changing notion (which became a modern cliché) that borrowing from a friend will kill the friendship but from an enemy there is no love lost in the case of default. The homosocial rules of friendship are regulatory in maintaining its membership. Those who do not follow its tenets are excluded from it. For example, Overreach is "contemptuous of the obligations of friendship" (Neill 198).

'tis enough I keep

Greedy at my devotion: so he serve

My purposes, let him hang, or damn him,  
I care not.

Friendship is but a word (2. 1. 19)

Welborne further excludes Overreach from the homosocial order by accepting physical cash from him, locating them in a similar dynamic to that of Antonio and Shylock. As soon as money exchanges hands in the dynamic established to date, at least one of them must be excluded from the peerage. Moreover, in his essay *Social Change and Philip Massinger*, Alan Gross states that the birthright of the gentry was still viewed as a divine right ordained by God. Neill claims that "Welborne, whose only obvious "right" to the restoration of the fortune he has squandered is that indicated by his name: the birthright of the idealized "true gentry" of the play" (Neill 186). In contrast, Gross replies that "Massinger analyses the increasing power of the trading class as an outward manifestation of individual moral perversion" (Gross 329). Accordingly, Overreach is aligned with atheism and heresy. He states that "wisdom / That does prescribe us a well-govern'd life / And to do right to others, as ourselves, / I value not an atom" (2. 1. 23). He instructs his daughter to "Learn anything, / And from any creature that

may make thee great; / From the devil himself" (3. 2. 120). In response, she characterizes him such: "[Y]ou could dispense / With your own honour; cast aside religion, / The hopes of heaven, or fear of hell" (3. 2. 129). Overreach admits "not the hate of all mankind here, / Nor the fear of what can fall hereafter, / Shall make me study aught but your advancement" (4. 1. 141). Lovell is therefore prompted to call him a "blasphemous beast" (4. 1. 152). The dynamic here seems to play into the canonization of true honour against purchased social station that the play represents.

But Neill somewhat misses the mark in the context of valorizing certain depictions of consumption. Referring to Overreach, Neill states, "the glamour of his conspicuous consumption links him with Jonsonian anti-heroes like Volpone" (Neill 194). Neill quotes a speech from Furnace that he defines as admiration, but the passage, upon closer inspection, seems to indicate condemnation. Overreach's conspicuous consumption is actually an example of pride that borders on hubris, and there is no glamour attached to it by Massinger. Muldrew points out that mercantile profit was ubiquitous and acceptable since "profit was the benefit of good husbandry. Of course, however, as Tawney stressed, profit earned through usury, [...] deceit or by other means directly harmful to others was condemned" (Muldrew 176). Overreach is guilty of all three: usury, deceit, and directly harming others. When Welborne uses deceit, he gains no profit but merely recoups his losses to start at a financial 'zero-balance' to begin regaining his honour. "Rising in the world, or 'improvement', was considered the moral reward of honest living and dealing" and profit that is "covetously hoarded" was condemned (Muldrew 176?). Again, Overreach is guilty. He attempts to rise in the world with dishonest dealing and hoarding.

Muldrew proceeds to extend the moral economy beyond the gentry to all levels of society which was "shared by both poor and wealthier tradesmen alike" (Muldrew 169). There are many scenes involving servants in this play. The behaviour of servants and the treatment they are due does not seem to follow a singular pattern in the play. Welborne, when first refused an

audience with Lady Alworth, tells her servants “why you slaves. . . that have not souls” (1. 3). But Welborne does not view servants as slaves. In the scene he calls them such, it is important to note that ‘slave’ was a pejorative slander commonly used against those who demonstrate insubordination. These servants were socially beneath Welborne and duly disobedient. Moreover, at the end of the scene, Massinger feels it necessary to reconcile the servants with him. At the behest of Lady Alworth, they agree to subordinate to him and he says, “Nay, all’s forgotten // And for a lucky omen to my project, // Shake hands, and end all quarrels in the cellar” (I. iii. 130). The servants reply with a flourish of “Agreed, agreed. Still merry Master Welborne” (1. 3. 133). Lady Alworth is compelled to placate Furnace in the face of his insubordinate ranting over her refusal to eat his culinary creations. His complaint, however, is actually couched in love and loyalty. Furnace simply wishes recognition for the hard work he offers her and in her request for his patience and her promise that she will have an appetite again soon, she does placate him. In 4. 1. 176, she goes so far as to praise the kind obedience of her underlings by saying that “twill become your breeding”. The mention of their breeding, considering hers, is emphatic. With the same servants, her stepson exemplifies the tenor of love between master and servant further. Neill describes a “comically touching affection between the servants and “Our late young master” (1. 2 and 2. 2)” (Neill 200-1). In 2. 2, Alworth can scarcely leave the room for the love offered to him. Alworth is charitable to his servants because they were part of the larger membership of the homosocial gentry. Friendship was extended to those who abided by the hierarchical rules and maintained their servitude. Muldrew agrees that “Although society was divided by hierarchical graduations of status and wealth, it was still bound together by credit relationships made all over the social scale” (Muldrew 178).

Playwrights made clear efforts to garner complicity for the gentry cause with all members of an audience of varying class distinctions in Elizabethan/Jacobean London. Perhaps the most obvious performative example comes

in Fletcher’s *To Rule a Wife and have a Wife*. Cacafo is an acceptable dumping ground for all losses within a play that is specifically concerned with not offending the audience (according to the prologue). There is a clear effort to gain complicity with the audience from the sheer number of asides aimed towards them. Including situational ones and ones marked only by dashes in addition to those overtly stage-directed, there are in the area of 51! Asides are not always merely a narrative tool to demonstrate the otherwise inner thoughts of a staged character. Rather, they can also be used as a method of participating with the audience directly and covertly establishing protagonistic ties, similar to the way an apostrophe to the reader works in written text. Chronologically, the rising tension seems to be reflected by the number of asides (in the latter category of audience complicity and establishing protagonism) throughout a survey of the plays:

- *Merchant*: 8
- *A Trick to Catch The Old One*: 86 (but the asides are in both categories – expressing the vile thoughts of the antagonist *and* garnering complicity with the protagonists)
- *Rule a Wife and have a Wife*: 51
- *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*: 20

This rising tide of aside attempts to call the audience into a complicity with a homosocial ideology indicates something of a zeitgeist of anxiety.

In fact, as late as 1675, William Wycherly was still rendering the usurer a pathetic soul. In *The Country Wife*, in the context of false appearances, one of his rake-heroes calls, “The usurer, a poor rogue possessed of mouldy bonds and mortgages” (Wycherly in Wise 558). Wycherly makes a second reference in the play which demonstrates the establishment of the trope and the ubiquity of usury within the economy. “Our sisters and daughters, like usurers’ money, are safest when put out” (Wycherly in Wise 596). The play has a staggering 118 asides but as with *A Trick*, they are ambiguously aimed at the audience, and have nothing to do with usury. Even later drama continues the convention

across Europe. In August Strindberg's 1908 symbolist drama, *The Ghost Sonata*, one of the characters makes a disparaging reference to the profession of usury in an attack against the old man.

In *A New Way*, in conjunction with these asides, is the performance of violence. Both tension and slapstick are powerful performative devices. This play is particularly violent in terms of how the characters act and threaten each other. Violence revolves around Sir Giles Overreach and Welborne in particular. The repercussions of this violence, for instance Overreach's threat of murdering Margaret, are high. The cause for the violence is not directly addressed by any of the characters in speech, so its source/purpose can only be interpreted from patterns. I posit three: 1. ) to raise the tension and anxiety of the play, 2. ) to demonstrate the dangers of driving a person to desperation, and 3. ) to punish those who are of no honour. Massinger was not as skilled a poet as Shakespeare but wanted to create some of the emotional concern that pervades *Merchant*. The similarity to *Merchant* in the role of the usurer is evident: they both lose their daughters to the homosocial gentry, they both lose their entire estate, they are both pathetic in their closing rants. The scenes in *A New Way* that threaten the most violence are the opening scene and 5. 1 when Overreach storms the widow's home while beating Marrall. It appears that only lower-classed sycophants who have compromised their honour to follow the avarice of Overreach ever take a physical beating: Tapwell and Froth in the first scene (we later learn that they actually had it coming), and Marrall throughout from Overreach.

The usurer had been established as a comic villain trope and usury itself was questionably questionable. The "gentry" was defending their claim to nobility and purchasing it with true honour, while foiling the avaricious usurer at his own game of deception. However, the gentry had no desire to eliminate the usurer from society. He was quite a necessary evil as is seen in *Merchant* when there is no ready cash to be had. Muldrew quotes Thomas Tusser as asking "Who Living but lends? And be lent they must; else buieng and selling might lie in the

dust" (Muldrew 171). Under the "1571 Usury Act, which tolerated interest rates of up to 10 percent" (Korda 132), the difference "between reserving and taking Usury" is noted. The latter is identified as the more punishable crime and speaks almost directly to the actions of the character Shylock. Reading more into the social dynamic than a play allows is anachronistic. We are dealing with theatre and with character types. Other plays, such as *Englishmen for my Money*, *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, and *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* reflected the homosocial sensibility with more levity and accept the usurer as a comic trope worthy of risibility and ridicule. In *Rule A Wife*, the usurer Cacafofo is characterized as short, fat, and easily swayed. It appears that the 'buffoon usurer' character had become a convention. (Cacafofo as a buffoon (1. 5. 30) and as a drunk at the end). Audiences had seen it before: Pisaro in *Englishmen for my Money*, Hoard in *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, and especially Hog in *The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl*. It is the practice of almost every character-type in the play (whether their integrity is questionable or not) to ridicule poor Cacafofo.

It appears that the purpose of the plays is threefold – to canonize male camaraderie, to celebrate romance and marriage, and to chastise usury, or at least relegate it to a dishonourable position outside of the male gentry. The homosocial sensibility delineates specific rules for the exchange of monetary credit and social credit. While the former is aligned with evil (albeit, a necessary one), the latter is aligned with virtue. The usurer is necessary, but the usurer's wealthy increase threatens the homosocial credit structure. Inevitably the gentry would dissolve under the power of wealth; therefore the anxiety for those who clung to it as part of their cultural identity was well founded. There is a fear of a collapsing social order that blames the very economy it deems necessary. This dialectic plays itself out on stage and the plays demonstrate efforts to maintain complicity with all members of the audience to uphold the dying sensibility.

In *Merchant*, *Timon*, and *New Way* we see higher levels of tension/anxiety regarding usury, often depicted through the threat of

violence. In *Merchant* it is threatened; in *Timon* it is exercised socially; in *New Way* it is exercised physically. *New Way* comes at the end of the era and it seems that the social acceptance of the usurer (reflected in increasingly comic or sympathetic characterization) finally threatened the gentry in such a way that Massinger, an admitted social conservative, lashed back with a return to violent disdain against usury. Not since before *Merchant* (In *The Three Ladies*) has usury been depicted so abominably and it seems that the cycle of anxiety began strongly against usury (*Three Ladies*), then questioned it deeply (*Merchant*), then attacked the homosocial economy of the gentry (*Timon*), then became accepted as necessary (comic tropes), then became a real threat to the gentry and returned to a stronger anxiety (*New Way*). i. e. the cycle came full circle before the homosocial gentry was toppled by new money in the seventeenth century (aided by James), and followed by the rise of the middle-class and melodrama (to meet their tastes in the theatres).

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*Death of Usury or The Disgrace of Usurers.*

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Originally printed in 1594, the text entitled *Death of Usury or The Disgrace of Usurers* occurs within the very beginning of the period of drama we have examined and might well have been amongst the causal texts that fed the discourse. There is no specific evidence to suggest it was part of a pamphlet or response war, but it participates with a number of similar texts discursive towards usury. The graphic book cover depicts "the various proceedings applicable to usurers that take place in the nether regions" (Seligman 665). Certainly its title echoes the 'medieval' view of usury. However, although the title claims to report "The Disgrace of Usurers", the text is ambiguous in maintaining this perspective. What is presented is a factual survey of definitions, practises, observations, laws and quotations regarding usury. The EEBO database shows that the text was reprinted in 1634 suggesting it was as relevant to the discourse well into the emergence of the early modern perspective of usury. In sharp contrast to the medieval piety inherent to the title, the title page also reads that it includes "an Explanation of the Statutes now in force concerning Usury, very profitable for this present Age" (cover). The genre of the text would most readily be identified as a legal dissertation, or at least as close as one might get in the period.

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*Debts*. Within these two plays, Gross outlines patterns that suggest Massinger had a deeply entrenched loyalty to the hierarchical gentry. Gross points out that he was born to service and that the violent faith he has in the system must have been ubiquitous.

*I Love You Man*. Dir. John Hamburg. Dreamworks Pictures, 2009. DVD.

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Korda, Natasha. "Dame Usury: Gender, Credit, and (Ac)Counting in the Sonnets and the Merchant of Venice." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60. 2 (2009): 129-53.

An article that examines the sociological reality in which the usury plays emerged. Korda discusses the ambiguity of the female usurer in terms of the Christian ethic against it, and the rise of women within the legal system, as exemplified by Portia in the *Merchant of Venice*, as a function of their usury. Korda ascribes substantial agency to women who, although subject to a patriarchal society, knew full well how to manipulate it to their ends.

Lawrence, Sean. "'to Give and to Receive': Performing Exchanges in the Merchant of Venice." *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*. Eds. Paul Yachnin, Patricia Badir, and Edward Pechter. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. 41-51.

Leitch, Vincent B. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 2001.

Specifically examining Judith Butler's work within the text, she argues that the performance of gender is part of an ongoing social sensibility into which individuals are born. She suggests that women are unconsciously complicit to the guiding rules of gender display within the structure of their society. She also delineates how longstanding institutions such as heterosexual marriage and the family will defend themselves against perceived social threats

such as homosexuality, and how individual members of the institution may manifest the defensiveness with violence.

Leonard, Nancy S. "Overreach at Bay: Massinger's A New Way to Pay Old Debts." *Philip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment*. Ed. Douglas Howard. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985. 171-192.

Marlowe, Christopher. *The Jew of Malta*. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/901/901-h/901-h.htm>> 1 October 2010.

Massinger, Philip, and T. W. Craik. *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. London: E. Benn, 1964.

Middleton, Thomas, d. 1627, et al. *The Works of Thomas Middleton*. New York: AMS Press, 1964.

Muldrew, Craig. *Interpreting the market: the ethics of credit and community relations in early modern England*. *Social History* 18. 2 (May 1993): 163-183. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4286109>>

An essay that takes a historical look at the early modern English economy from a sociological perspective. Muldrew ascribes a social sensibility that was driven by relationships of friendship in direct contrast to the emerging financial economy. He criticizes neo-economists that have ascribed Smithian or Marxian motives of self-interest retroactively in their depictions of economic dealings of the era.

Neill, Michael. "Massinger's Patriarchy: The Social Vision of A New Way to Pay Old Debts." *Renaissance Drama* 10 (1979): 185-213.

Beginning by reporting that the character of Overreach was an allegory for one Sir Giles Mompesson, Neill carefully traces the behaviour of the character in the play and how he demonstrates an anti-patriarchal behaviour which is his defining characteristic as the antagonist. Neill makes several comparisons to historical society to argue that the entire Elizabethan/Jacobean economy was predicated on a patriarchal hierarchy and sensibility which he sees variously reflected in the play.

Newman, Karen. "Portia's Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange in the Merchant of Venice." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38. 1 (1987): 19-33.

Pequigney, J. "The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in Twelfth Night and the Merchant of Venice." *English literary renaissance* 22. 2 (1992): 201.

An article that explores the nature of homosocial and homoerotic relationships that may have existed in early modern England based on the Shakespearean play *Twelfth Night* and *Merchant of Venice*. It appears she chooses these two plays merely from the coincidence in the name of the character Antonio in each play. In fact, the article shows that both Antonio's are conspicuously involved in homosocial exchanges. Pequigney comes to separate conclusions for each play, that *Twelfth Night* represents homoerotic male love while *Merchant* does not. Nevertheless, the article strongly points to a society in which male bonding and love was prevalent.

Rich, Jennifer. "The Merchant Formerly Known as Jew: Redefining the Rhetoric of Merchantry in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*." *Early Modern Literary Studies: A Journal of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Literature* 13. 3 (2008): 2. 1.

Jennifer Rich presents a somewhat colloquial look at the Jew as other in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. The article is heavily laden with obsolete notions of Shakespeare's antisemitism, but provides insight into a culture that defensively defined 'us' and 'them' by any ethnic or social barriers available to it.

Rensley, Penelope Jane Howell. "Androgyny in the *Merchant of Venice* : Towards a Feminist Ideal." 1992.

Rivers, Bryan. "'Unnaturally Drawn': Harriette Wilson's Criticism of Shakespeare's Shylock (1811)." *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 21. 4 (2008): 34-6.

Rosenshield, Gary. "Deconstructing the Christian Merchant: Antonio and the *Merchant of Venice*." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 20. 2 (2002): 28-51.

Seligman, Edwin R. A. "Curiosities of Early Economic Literature: An Address to His Fellow Members of the Hobby Club of New York", ed. Luca Fiorito. *History of Political Economy* 32 (2000): 659-91. Project Muse. 31 October 2009 <[http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/journals/history\\_of\\_political\\_economy/v032/32.3seligman.html](http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/journals/history_of_political_economy/v032/32.3seligman.html)>

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Vagios, Vassilis. "Beyond T's and V's: Towards a Study of the Language of Social Relations in the *Merchant of Venice*." *NTU Studies in Language and Literature* 10 (2001): 75-104.

Woodbridge, Linda. "Payback Time: On the Economic Rhetoric of Revenge in the *Merchant of Venice*." *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*. Eds. Paul Yachnin, Patricia Badir, and Edward Pechter. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. 29-40.

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Žižek, Slavoj. "From Reality to the Real." *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. Ed. John Storey. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education, Ltd., 2009. 332-347.

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