

The Merchant of Venice

Act I, sc. 1 (line 79)

ANTONIO

*I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.*

GRATIANO

Let me play the fool:

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,

And let my liver rather heat with wine

Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.

Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,

Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?

Sleep when he wakes and creep into the jaundice

By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio--

I love thee, and it is my love that speaks--

There are a sort of men whose visages

Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,

And do a wilful stillness entertain,

With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion

Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,

As who should say 'I am Sir Oracle,

And when I ope my lips let no dog bark!'

O my Antonio, I do know of these

That therefore only are reputed wise

For saying nothing; when, I am very sure,

If they should speak, would almost damn those ears,
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.
I'll tell thee more of this another time:
But fish not, with this melancholy bait,
For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.
Come, good Lorenzo. Fare ye well awhile:
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.