WAS SHERLOCK HOLMES A JEW?

John Allen, 11 June 2018

We begin with a pop quiz, or a trivia question if you prefer.

What is the origin of the following quote?

> "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?"

The answer is William Shakespeare, whoever he might have been, for there is also a Shakespeare authorship controversy, not of my making I might add. Shakespeare put those words into the mouth of his character Shylock, thereby making Shylock the most famous literary Jew of all time.

Now that your eyes and neurons have ceased jumping back and forth between the names *Shylock* and *Sherlock*, and seeing that the names are nearly identical, I suspect that you are already trying to decide if Louise Conan Doyle did indeed name Sherlock after Shylock.

And now that you have made it as far as this sentence, I suspect that many of you have already formed an opinion on the matter, suddenly being confident that my hypothesis of Sherlock as Shylock is either ludicrous or brilliantly insightful. Others of you, the more cautious among you, have yet to reach a firm conclusion, but you already have your hopes and expectations, favoring one outcome over another. Still others of you are merely curious, sufficiently interested to continue reading, sufficiently chastened by life experience to await the evidence before jumping to a conclusion.

"No data, yet," ~~Shylock~~ Sherlock cautioned us in his first adventure, *A Study in Scarlet*. "It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence."

"Data! data! data!" he demanded in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*. "I cannot make bricks without clay."

In this too lengthy essay, I hope to provide some clay.

WHO IS SHYLOCK?

I begin my description of Shylock by excerpting extensively from the excellent and eponymous Wikipedia article, adding paragraph breaks at my pleasure.

> Shylock is a character in William Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. A Venetian Jewish moneylender, Shylock is the play's principal antagonist. His defeat and conversion to Christianity form the climax of the story. […]

> Shylock is a Jew who lends money to his Christian rival Antonio, setting the security at a pound of Antonio's flesh. When a bankrupt Antonio defaults on the loan, Shylock demands the pound of flesh. This decision is fueled by his sense of revenge, for Antonio had previously insulted, physically assaulted and spat on him [...] dozens of times, defiled the "sacred" Jewish religion and had also inflicted massive financial losses on him.
>
> Meanwhile, Shylock's daughter, Jessica, falls in love with Antonio's friend Lorenzo and converts to Christianity, leaves Shylock's house and steals vast riches from him, which adds to Shylock's rage and hardens his resolve for revenge.
>
> In the end – due to the efforts of Antonio's well-wisher, Portia – Shylock is charged with attempted murder of a Christian, carrying a possible death penalty, and Antonio is freed without punishment.

I now turn to Isaac Asimov's excellent and eponymous *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare* (1970).

> We can picture him (and he is usually presented on the stage) as a tall man with a beak of a nose, a long black beard, curly sideburns, a skull cap, and a long black coat. He is, in short, a Jew, and his name is Shylock.
>
> Shylock is not a Jewish name; there was never a Jew named Shylock that anyone has heard of; the name is an invention of Shakespeare's which has entered the common language [...] to represent any grasping, greedy, hard-hearted creditor. I have heard Jews themselves use the word with exactly this meaning, referring back to Shakespeare's character.
>
> Where did Shakespeare get the name? There is a Hebrew word *shalakh*, which appears twice in the Bible (Leviticus 11:17 and Deuteronomy 14:17). In both places, birds of prey are listed as unfit articles of diet for Jews. No one knows exactly what bird is meant by *shalakh*, but the usual translation into English gives it as "cormorant."
>
> The cormorant is a sea bird which eats fish so voraciously that the word has come to mean personified greed and voraciousness. Shakespeare apparently is using a form of the Hebrew word both as a name and as a characterization of the Jewish moneylender.

I interrupt my dueling excerpts with an excerpt from *The Veiled Lodger*, a late Holmes adventure, one I believe to have been written by Jean rather than by Louise. In the introduction to that story, Watson makes known to his readers that someone is attempting to steal and destroy his notes of many untold Holmes adventures, and he issues a very interesting threat to discourage further efforts. The emphasis is mine.

> I deprecate, however, in the strongest way the attempts which have been made lately to get at and to destroy these papers. The source of these outrages is known, and if they are repeated I have Mr Holmes's authority for saying that **the whole story concerning the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant will be given to the public**. There is at least one reader who will understand.

I still have considerable research to accomplish before I decide whether Watson's threat of revealing all about the "politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant" was in anyway related to the origin of the names Shylock and Sherlock. For now, I leave that tantalizing tidbit for you to ponder, and I return to excerpting descriptions of Shylock. Back to the Wikipedia article.

> In Shakespeare's time, no Jews had been legally present in England for several hundred years (since the Edict of Expulsion in 1290). However, stereotypes of Jews as money lenders remained from the Middle Ages. Historically, money lending had been a fairly common occupation among Jews, in part because Christians were not permitted to practise usury, then considered to mean charging interest of any kind on loans, and Jews were excluded from other fields of work. At the same time, most Christian kings forbade Jews to own land for farming or to serve in the government, and craft guilds usually refused to admit Jews as artisans. Thus money lending was one of the few occupations still open to Jews. […]
>
> Since Shakespeare's time, the character's name has become a synonym for loan shark, and as a verb to shylock means to lend money at exorbitant rates. In addition, the phrase "pound of flesh" has also entered the lexicon as slang for a particularly onerous or unpleasant obligation. [...]

Now back to Asimov, who does a nice job describing how Shylock would have been perceived by Elizabethan and Victorian audiences.

> Shylock's next remark about hating Christians further emphasizes his unrelieved villainy to a good Christian audience. They are not likely to reflect that the Jews of Shakespeare's time had little to associate with their Christian neighbors but abuse, blows, and worse and could scarcely be expected to love them for it. (As Israel Zangwill, the English-Jewish writer, is supposed to have said with sardonic bitterness in the last years of the nineteenth century: "The Jews are a frightened people. Nineteen centuries of Christian love has broken down their nerves.")
>
> And yet the Christians were but victims of their training too. Each Christian knew of Jews from the New Testament tales that were repeated in church week in and week out. The Jews had rejected Jesus and demanded the crucifixion. The Jews had opposed and persecuted the apostles. In the time of the Crusades, tales arose that Jews poisoned wells and sacrificed Christian children as part of the celebration of the Passover.
>
> Furthermore, added to all these abstractions, there was in England a contemporary case of an actual Jew of alleged villainy. Queen Elizabeth I had had as her personal physician one Roderigo Lopez. He first accepted the post in 1586.
>
> Lopez was of Portuguese origin, which made him worse than a foreigner. To be sure, he was converted to Christianity, but born Christians generally suspected the sincerity of a Jew's conversion.

> In 1594 Lopez came under suspicion of trying to poison the Queen in return for Spanish bribes. It is the modern opinion that he was innocent, and certainly Queen Elizabeth seemed to believe he was innocent. The Earl of Essex (of whom Shakespeare was a devoted follower) held a strong belief in Lopez' guilt and forced a trial. A Portuguese ex-Jew could scarcely expect a very objective or fair trial, and Lopez was convicted and then executed before a huge crowd under conditions of utmost brutality.

Rodrigo Lopez was famously "hanged, drawn, and quartered," though the brutality was not necessarily inflicted in that order. The punishment, then mandatory in England for men convicted of high treason consisted of being dragged (drawn) by horse to the place of execution, there to be hanged almost to the point of death, emasculated, disemboweled, and beheaded before what remained of the body was chopped into four pieces (quartered). Women found guilty of high treason were more graciously burned at the stake.

But back to Shylock and his alleged crime. For convoluted reasons, Shylock loaned his enemy Antonio substantial money at zero interest, demanding instead a pound of Antonio's flesh should the loan be defaulted, which it was. The hearing to enforce the contract turned into a trial in which Shylock was charged with attempted murder. The judge, who was not actually a judge but rather Antonio's well-wisher, Portia, in disguise, ruled that Shylock intended that Antonio would die as the pound of flesh was extracted. The judge, who (as you might remember from the previous sentence) was not actually a judge, therefore ordered that Shylock forfeit his entire fortune, half to Antonio, and half to the State, an early form of our current civil forfeiture approach to making off with people's money.

However, having just earlier argued that "the quality of mercy is not strained, it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven," the judge, who wasn't actually a judge, offered Shylock a deal he couldn't refuse. Shylock could generously keep the State's recently confiscated half of Shylock's own fortune if and only if:

> 1. he, Shylock, bequeathed the State's half to his daughter, who had already stolen much of her father's fortune and converted to Christianity, and
>
> 2. he, Shylock, agreed to convert to Christianity.

Asimov explains that the resolution, by the standards of the day, was a happy ending.

> The notion of forced conversion to Christianity was often justified by a verse in Luke. In a parable told in that Gospel, a man giving a feast found that his guests refused his invitation. He therefore sent his servants out to find strangers to attend the feast, and, if necessary, to make them attend by force. "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23). [...]
>
> The present Western liberal tradition considers such forced conversions in any direction to be abhorrent, but the Elizabethans would not find it so. To force a Jew to turn Christian was,

> in their view, a crowning mercy, since it rescued him from the certainty of hell and placed him on the route to salvation.

I'll give Wikipedia the last word in my delegated description of Shylock.

> Many modern readers and audiences have read the play as a plea for tolerance, with Shylock as a sympathetic character. Shylock's 'trial' at the end of the play is a mockery of justice, with Portia acting as a judge when she has no real right to do so. Shakespeare does not question Shylock's intentions, but that the very people who berated Shylock for being dishonest have resorted to trickery in order to win.

DID LOUISE READ SHAKESPEARE?

Absolutely. We know that Louise was a voracious reader with an encyclopedic memory. Anyone doubting that might read my essay "Keswick the Paperhanger."

More specifically, we know that Louise read and remembered details from multiple plays attributed to Shakespeare. In the very first Sherlock Holmes adventure, the one in which she decided to name her detective after Shakespeare's Shylock, she had Sherlock explain how he knew that the murderer was young.

> "Well, if a man can stride four and a half feet without the smallest effort, he can't be quite in the sere and yellow. That was the breadth of a puddle on the garden walk which he had evidently walked across. Patent-leather boots had gone round, and Square-toes had hopped over. There is no mystery about it at all."

I'm guessing you missed the allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. I certainly did, at least until several other writers pointed it out for me. Now I can't help but see it, being that I am in my sere and yellow. Macbeth was also growing old, and he said so, using the words "sere" (for dry and withered) and "yellow" (as in a leaf ready to drop from its tree). The emphasis below, of course, is mine.

> Seyton!—I am sick at heart,
> When I behold—Seyton, I say!—This push
> Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.
> I have lived long enough. **My way of life**
> **Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf**,
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have, but, in their stead,
> Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honor, breath
> Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not.

That is from Act 5, Scene 3, and Louise remembered it. She blended it seamlessly into her first Sherlock Holmes adventure, the one in which she named Sherlock after Shylock.

Not yet convinced? Then consider next that Sherlock knew that the murderer, whom he identified as Square Toes, had stepped effortlessly over the large puddle by examining footprints in the surrounding dust.

> "I could read all that in the dust; and I could read that as he walked he grew more and more excited. That is shown by the increased length of his strides. He was talking all the while, and working himself up, no doubt, into a fury."

I'm guessing that you missed the allusion to Shakespeare's *Titus and Andronicus*. I certainly did, at least until Samuel Rosenberg pointed it out in his disruptive book *Naked is the Best Disguise: The Death and Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes* (1974).

In *Titus and Andronicus*, the most gruesome of Shakespeare's stories, Lavinia is raped and mutilated. The rapists afterwards cut out her tongue so she could not speak their names, and they severed her hands so that she could not write their names. So Lavinia explained to her father what had happened to her by using her stumps to turn to the pages of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Most readers would miss the significance of Lavinia using Ovid to tell her story. I certainly did, but Louise did not. Among his stories, Ovid relates the Greek legend of Juno and Io. After Juno raped Io, he turned her into a cow so she could not tell of what he had done to her. Io then tried to tell her father what had happened by using her hoof to write in the dust.

Now back to *Titus and Andronicus*. After turning to the story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lavinia put a stick in her mouth and used it to write the names of her attackers in the sand.

Perhaps it is only coincidental that Louise had ~~Shylock~~ Sherlock determine that the murderer was not in his sere and yellow by reading his footprints also in the dust. Perhaps, but not likely.

The Holmes adventures, both early and late, are awash in allusions to Shakespeare's plays. Some of them are so clear that even I can recognize them.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for example, we learn that there is "**method in his madness**." In Louie's *The Reigate Squires*, we read of Watson saying about Holmes, "I have usually found that there was method in his madness," and we read of Inspector Forrester replying, "Some folk might say there was madness in his method."

In Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, we learn that two riders had fallen "out of their saddles into the dirt; and **thereby hangs a tale**." In Louise's *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, we read of Holmes saying, "Ah, thereby hangs a rather painful tale."

In Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, we read "**I have not slept one wink.**" In Louise's *Case of Identity*, we read "I have not slept one wink."

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, we learn of two characters named **Duncan and Ross**. In Louise's *A Study in Scarlet*, we learn that a mysterious woman, who turned out to be someone other than she first

appeared to be, lived on Duncan Street. From Louise's *The Red Headed League*, we learn that that the mastermind behind the bank heist used the alias Duncan Ross.

There are many other Shakespearean allusions in the Holmes Canon, some clear, some so obscure as to be questionable, some yet to be recognized. Each of the three authors who wrote the Holmes adventures read and remembered Shakespeare. Louise tended to more subtly blend her allusions into her stories, but it is clear that Louise, Arthur, and Jean each had more than a working knowledge of Shakespeare's plays.

DID LOUISE INTEND THAT SHERLOCK BE A JEW?

Mahatma Gandhi, when asked if he was a Hindu, replied, "Yes I am. I am also a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist, and a Jew, and so are all of you."

In that respect, Louise did intend that Sherlock be a Jew. She intended also that he be a gentile, an Englishman, an African, a man's man, a frail woman, and everything in between. Louise intended that Sherlock be a composite of all mankind, brilliant and quirky, modest and vain, astoundingly generous and inexplicably greedy, too complex and too contradictory to be easily explained. She did so by cleverly giving him the stereotypical characteristics that Victorian Englishmen attributed to others they deemed less worthy.

I will discuss Sherlock as an African and as a woman elsewhere. Here, I will limit the discussion to his stereotypical Jewish characteristics. By writing of them, I do not suggest that the stereotypes were (or are) accurate. Louise herself made fun of any suggestion that they might be.

Louise gave Sherlock a hooked nose stereotypical of Jews. She didn't call it a hooked nose, since that would be too obvious, and since that would give away the game, which is still afoot. Instead Louise gave Sherlock a "hawk-like nose," one that "gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision."

Louise tantalizes us, as she frequently does, by giving Sherlock the nose of a hawk, a bird of prey that is just as unkosher as a *shalakh*, whatever strange bird that might be. Sherlock's hooked nose, however, did not give him the appearance of a Jew. Instead, it gave him an air of alertness and decision.

Louise knew that her contemporaries believed they could detect Jews by the shape of their nose. In *The Stockbroker's Clerk*, she had Holmes's prospective client, one Mr. Hall Pycroft, describe to Holmes the strange circumstances of his proffered mystery as follows, the emphasis being mine.

> "And now I come to the queer part of the business. I was in diggings out Hampstead way, Potter's Terrace, was the address. Well, I was sitting doing a smoke that very evening after I had been promised the appointment, when up came my landlady with a card which had '**Arthur Pinner**, **financial agent**,' printed upon it. I had never heard the name before, and could not imagine what he wanted with me, but of course I asked her to show him up. In he walked—**a middle-sized, dark-haired, dark-eyed, black-bearded man, with a touch of**

> **the sheeny about his nose.** He had a brisk kind of way with him and spoke sharply, like a man that knew the value of time."

Sheeny was a derogatory term for Jew, one that has generally fallen into disuse today, and thank goodness for that. And shame on Louise for using the word, even if she put it in the mouth of a minor character, even if the financial agent was indeed a Jew, as indicated by his nose, his occupation, and his last name.

But it is always dangerous to underestimate Louise, to suggest that she might harbor or express stereotypical disapproval of others. She had a point to make, and we have failed to recognize it for more than a century. It turns out that Hall Pycroft was foolishly wrong when he made his stereotypical assumptions about Arthur Pinner. Holmes discovered Pinner was neither a financial agent nor a Jew. Arthur Pinner was not even named Pinner. Instead, he was a famous forger named Beddington.

Since Beddington is a name more indicative of a Victorian gentile than a Jew, we can now conclude that Beddington's nose, rather than indicating his Jewishness, gave him air of alertness and decision, and that air allowed him to prevail over someone so easily deceived as Hall Pycroft.

In addition to providing Sherlock with his Shylock sounding name and his hawk-like nose, Louise decided to make him a gifted violinist, since Jews and violins are closely associated. *The Jerusalem Post*, in its 20 August 2009 online edition, discussed the issue in "Did Jews Invent the Violin?: an affinity for the violin has long been a part of the Jewish identity," by Elana Estrin.

> From Fiddler on the Roof to the ubiquitous fiddler in the works of painter Marc Chagall to world-renowned musician Itzhak Perlman, the violin has long been associated with the Jewish people. What accounts for this connection? The answer is still unclear, but scholars believe that Jewish ties to the violin may go back to the very beginning. "It doesn't look like the violin is of Italian origin. It looks like it's of Jewish origin," says Monica Huggett, a violinist and artistic director of the Historical Performance Program at the Juilliard School in New York City. The origin of the violin has always been murky. Scholars have suspected that the violin's precursor, the viol, was invented in Spain in the second half of the 15th century - before the Jews were expelled. Then, shortly after the Spanish expulsion, the viol showed up in Italy, where it quickly developed into the violin we know today.

Many people know that the Jews were once expelled from Spain, by fewer of us realized that Jews were also expelled from Britain. I'll make a quick detour to the Wikipedia article "Edict of Expulsion" for a quick summary.

> The Edict of Expulsion was a royal decree issued by King Edward I of England on 18 July 1290, expelling all Jews from the Kingdom of England. The expulsion edict remained in force for the rest of the Middle Ages. The edict was not an isolated incident, but the culmination of over 200 years of increased persecution. The edict was overturned during the Protectorate

> more than three centuries later, when Oliver Cromwell permitted Jews to return to England in 1657.

Now back to the hawk-nosed Sherlock and his violin. In her first Holmes adventure, *A Study in Scarlet*, Louise had Watson describe Sherlock's violin skills as remarkable but eccentric.

> These were very remarkable, but as eccentric as all his other accomplishments. That he could play pieces, and difficult pieces, I knew well, because at my request he has played me some of Mendelssohn's Lieder, and other favourites. When left to himself, however, he would seldom produce any music or attempt any recognized air. Leaning back in his arm-chair of an evening, he would close his eyes and scrape carelessly at the fiddle which was thrown across his knee. Sometimes the chords were sonorous and melancholy. Occasionally they were fantastic and cheerful. Clearly they reflected the thoughts which possessed him, but whether the music aided those thoughts, or whether the playing was simply the result of a whim or fancy, was more than I could determine. I might have rebelled against these exasperating solos had it not been that he usually terminated them by playing in quick succession a whole series of my favourite airs as a slight compensation for the trial upon my patience.

It is probably not coincidence that Felix Mendelssohn, composer of Mendelssohn's *Lieder*, was Jewish. It is also probably no coincidence either that Louise's choice of Mendelssohn's *Lieder* involves an incongruity. Louise alerted us to many of her allusions via such incongruity. While Mendelssohn wrote many works for the violin, his *Lieder ohne Worte* (*Songs without Words*) were written for the piano.

Later, in her *Adventure of The Cardboard Box*, Louise had Holmes speak to Watson, for an hour, on the extraordinary violinist, Nicolo Paganini. That's another interesting choice since, according to legend, Paganini made a pact with the devil to acquire his otherwise inexplicable skills. Paganini was even accused of being Jewish, though he was not. I add my emphasis to the following excerpt from Maiko Kawabata's "Virtuosity, the Violin, the Devil ... What Really Made Paganini 'Demonic'?" from the Spring 2007 issue of *Current Musicology*.

> Our inherited image of Nicolo Paganini as a "demonic" violinist—a Gothic figure exemplifying Romanticism and epitomizing instrumental virtuosity—has never been analyzed in depth. What really made him "demonic"? According to the most popular legend, Paganini, like Faust, made a pact with Satan to acquire magical powers—enabling him to create effects on the violin beyond the reach of anyone else. Others thought he was possessed by the devil and coaxed the violin to produce what they took to be the devil's music. Still others, encouraged by the spectacle of him literally "lashing" the violin with his bow, considered him "demonic" in the Gothic sense of being corrupt and perverted, a licentious criminal in the tradition of the Marquis de Sade and Byron's hero-villains. Faust, magician, Satan, sadistic villain: the faces of Paganini were interrelated but not equivalent. […]

> By all accounts Paganini was extremely pale, his complexion accentuated by his dark hair and attire. **His unusual countenance and rumored diabolical collusion, when placed in the context of ethnic stereotyping in certain parts of Europe, elicited derogatory assertions that Paganini was Jewish** (despite the fact that he was an Italian Catholic). Remarks about his "Jewish cast of features" or his "**large black eyes, hooked nose, and jet black hair, which is long and more than half hides his expressive Jewish face**" recycled alarming stereotypes and reinforced negative associations with Jewishness, especially in Vienna, where one journalist went so far as to call Paganini "the devil's spawn, **the Wandering Jew incarnate.**"

Perhaps the most common and harmful stereotype of Jews, even today, is that they are greedy, grasping, and avaricious. Louise, in two instances, intentionally made her ~~Shylock~~ Sherlock seem just that. The second instance came in *The Cardboard Box*, within the very paragraph where she had Holmes speak for so long of Paganini. I present the entire paragraph below, in which Watson described a leisurely meal with Holmes.

> We had a pleasant little meal together, during which Holmes would talk about nothing but violins, narrating with great exultation how he had purchased his own Stradivarius, which was worth at least five hundred guineas, at a Jew broker's in Tottenham Court Road for fifty-five shillings. This led him to Paganini, and we sat for an hour over a bottle of claret while he told me anecdote after anecdote of that extraordinary man.

This is not a very favorable portrayal of Holmes, having him gloat over purchasing a rare violin for only one-half of one percent of its actual value, taking advantage of an obviously uniformed broker, and a Jewish broker at that.

So that's the second piece of evidence pointing towards Sherlock's avariciousness. The first piece of evidence is found at the very end Holme's very first adventure, *A Study in Scarlet*, when Sherlock laughed that all the credit for his work would go to the police. I present below, for your utter amazement, the closing lines of Louise's first Holmes adventure.

> "Didn't I tell you so when we started?" cried Sherlock Holmes, with a laugh. "That's the result of all our Study in Scarlet; to get them a testimonial!"
>
> "Never mind," I answered; "I have all the facts in my journal, and the public shall know them. In the meantime you must make yourself contented by the consciousness of success, like the Roman miser:
>
> > 'Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
> > Ipse domi simul ac nummos contemplor in arca."'

Perhaps you weren't amazed after all, since you are not as fluent in Latin as were Holmes, Watson, and Louise. Neither am I. Other writers though, have already properly attributed the quote, though they have all failed to take note of its significance.

The quote is from Horace, born Quintus Horatius Flaccus, the leading Roman lyric poet during the time of Augustus, aka Octavian. More specifically, the quote is from the first satire of Horace's first book of *Satires*. That satire targets avarice and greed, arguing that a life of moderation is the most likely to be full and content. The words Louise chose, however, are from the mouth of a foolish miser, one who takes pride in his avarice, one who is used as a counterexample to Horace's teaching.

There are various English translations of the quote, but they all tell the same story: one need not be concerned about what others think if one has lots of money. I choose to present the translation from the marvelous *The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia*, one of my favorite and most trusted online sources. According to that site, Watson advised Sherlock to remember the words of a famous miser, "The public hisses at me, but I applaud myself in my own house, and simultaneously contemplate the money in my chest."

By use of that quote, Louise introduced another incongruity. Given that no one was hissing at Sherlock, and given that Sherlock showed no particular interest in money, other than in the two examples provided herein, and given that Sherlock received not a dime for the case he had just solved, the line, for a long time, made no sense to me. It was not until it occurred to me that Sherlock was named after Shylock, that Louise was attributing Shylock's stereotypes to Sherlock, that I finally came to understand the significance of the strange closing to Holmes's first adventure.

Though I am part way through *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*, it has suddenly become clear to me what prompted Louise to quote Horace as she did. Shakespeare quoted Horace in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare did so when he had the fool Launcelot speak with Shylock's daughter, Jessica, telling her that she was damned whether she was actually the daughter of Shylock or, alternatively, a bastard of some unknown gentile.

> Launcelot: Yes, truly, for look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children. Therefore I promise ye I fear you. I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter. Therefore be o' good cheer, for truly I think you are damned. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good, and that is but a kind of bastard hope neither.
>
> Jessica: And what hope is that, I pray thee?
>
> Launcelot: Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew's daughter.
>
> Jessica: That were a kind of bastard hope, indeed: so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.
>
> Launcelot: Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother: thus when I shun Scylla, your father, I fall into Charybdis, your mother: well, you are gone both ways.

Asimov explains the reference to Scylla and Charybdis for us.

> Scylla and Charybdis were a pair of deadly dangers which in Homer's *Odyssey* were described as being on either side of a narrow strait. The strait in question is generally

> accepted as being the Strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily—which is two and a half miles wide at its narrowest.
>
> Scylla is described as a monster on the Italian side of the strait. It has twelve legs and six heads. Each head is on a long neck and is armed with a triple row of teeth. (It is almost impossible to resist the temptation that this is the distorted description of a large octopus with its sucker-studded tentacles.) The heads bark like so many puppies and during the confused yelping, the necks dart forth, with each head snatching at a sailor on any ship that passes beneath.
>
> Charybdis was the personification of a whirlpool on the Sicilian side of the strait, which three times a day sucked down the waters and then threw them up again.
>
> Odysseus had to pass the strait twice. First, with a full ship, he chanced Scylla and lost six men. The next time, alone on a raft, he passed across Charybdis, seizing a branch overhead when the raft was sucked down and waiting for its return before proceeding.
>
> To be "between Scylla and Charybdis" is the classical way of saying "between the devil and the deep sea." The statement "avoiding Scylla, he fell into Charybdis" was used by the roman poet Horace, whom Launcelot is here paraphrasing.

For comparison, here are the words of Horace.

> Well, betwixt these, what should a wise man do?
> Which should he copy, think you, of the two?
> 'Tis Scylla and Charybdis, rock and gulf:
> On this side howls the dog, on that the wolf.

Louise didn't need Asimov's explanation. She was well aware of Horace's Scylla and Charybdis metaphor. She even had Watson use it in his introduction to her *The Resident Patient*.

> In glancing over the somewhat incoherent series of memoirs with which I have endeavoured to illustrate a few of the mental peculiarities of my friend, Mr Sherlock Holmes, I have been struck by the difficulty which I have experienced in picking out examples which shall in every way answer my purpose. For in those cases in which Holmes has performed some tour-de-force of analytical reasoning, and has demonstrated the value of his peculiar methods of investigation, the facts themselves have often been so slight or so commonplace that I could not feel justified in laying them before the public. On the other hand, it has frequently happened that he has been concerned in some research where the facts have been of the most remarkable and dramatic character, but where the share which he has himself taken in determining their causes has been less pronounced than I, as his biographer, could wish. The small matter which I have chronicled under the heading of **'A Study in Scarlet**,' and that other later one connected with the loss of **the Gloria Scott**, may serve as examples of this **Scylla and Charybdis** which are forever threatening his historian. It may be that, in the business of which I am now about to write, the part which my friend

> played is not sufficiently accentuated; and yet the whole train of circumstances is so remarkable that I cannot bring myself to omit it entirely from this series.

It is masterful that Louise equated the Gloria Scott with Charybdis, since her *Adventure of the Gloria Scott* dealt with a mysterious disappearance of a prisoner transport ship. At first blush, though, it seems not quite so apt that *A Study in Scarlet* be equated with Scylla, which Watson had just earlier equated with adventures in which the facts of the case were slight or commonplace. That is hardly true of *A Study in Scarlet*.

But, once again, an understanding comes to those willing to consider the possibility Louise was surreptitiously assigning Jewish stereotypes to her character Sherlock, whom she had named after Shylock. Consider, if you will, a more complete excerpt of Horace's use of Scylla and Charybdis.

> But here Ofellus draws a line, between
> A life that's frugal and a life that's mean:
> For 'tis in vain that luxury you shun,
> If straight on avarice your bark [barque] you run.
> [...]
> Well, betwixt these, what should a wise man do?
> Which should he copy, think you, of the two?
> 'Tis Scylla and Charybdis, rock and gulf:
> On this side howls the dog, on that the wolf.
> A man that's neat in table, as in dress,
> Errs not by meanness, yet avoids excess;

Horace was once again arguing for a life of moderation, identifying luxury with Charybdis and avarice with Scylla. In *The Resident Patient*, Louise wasn't arguing that the facts in *A Study in Scarlet* were slight and commonplace. She was once again teasing people to read Horace, just as she teased them to do so at the end of *A Study in Scarlet*.

Louise found Horace's words for *A Study in Scarlet* his first book of *Satires*. She found Horace's words for *The Resident Patient* both in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Horace's second book of *Satires*. We can be confident that she read both Shakespeare and Horace, that she assigned stereotypical Jewish characteristics to Sherlock, that she masked them, and that she left clues that she had done so. We can be confident that there was method in her madness.

SO, DO YOU THINK THAT LOUISE INTENDED THAT SHERLOCK BE A JEW?

Yes, I do, with the qualifications stated previously. I believe she intended him to be a Jew, a gentile, a man, a woman, an African and a European. I believe she intended him to be a composite of humanity.

WHY NOT ARTHUR AS THE AUTHOR?

First, Arthur did not intend the character be named Sherlock Holmes. From a half page of sketchy notes that presage Arthur's thoughts for *A Study in Scarlet*, we find the names Sherringford Holmes

and Ormand Sacker, in Arthur's handwriting. We can be thankful that Louise intervened and prevailed.

Second, all of the intricate work to compose Holmes from bits and pieces of all races, religions, and genders was part of a broader subtext that ran throughout the early adventures. Not only was Arthur ignorant of the subtext, he would have disapproved of its inclusion in the stories published under his name.

In "Sidelights on Sherlock Holmes," included as Chapter XI of his autobiography, Arthur had a perfect opportunity to explain that he had buried allusions in the Holmes adventures, assuming, of course, he was the person who buried them. Such insight would certainly have been an interesting sidelight on Sherlock Holmes, whom Arthur otherwise ignored throughout his 400 page autobiography. You will not, however, find any such revelation within "Sidelights on Sherlock Holmes," or in any of Arthur's may other writings, interviews, speeches, and personal correspondence. It is as if Arthur was oblivious to the subtext.

"The first object of a novelist is to tell a tale," Arthur explained during an 1894 interview, "If he has no story to tell, what is he there for? Possibly he has something to say which is worth saying, but he should say it in another form."

Third, the subtext in the early Holmes adventures argues for the equality of all mankind. Though Arthur was a humanitarian, in that he did want to see others treated in brutal fashion, he was definitely not an egalitarian. His non-Holmes writings are littered with racist terminology and thought too extensive and too ugly to detail here.

WHY DID LOUISE NAME SHERLOCK AFTER SHYLOCK?

For me, that is the bigger question, and one for which I hope to suggest an answer.

I begin by offering Shylock's entire response to a question about what he intended to do with the pound of flesh that he insisted on extracting from Antonio's vitals. As I did before, I insert paragraph breaks at my pleasure, thus to more clearly delineate the individual points that Shakespeare hoped to make, beginning with Shylock's intention to use the flesh a fish bait, if nothing else.

> "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 villainy you teach me I will execute—and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction."

When, soon thereafter, asked if he has any fear of legal consequences, Shylock responded:

> "What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
>
> "You have among you many a purchased slave, which—like your asses and your dogs and mules—you use in abject and in slavish parts because you bought them.
>
> "Shall I say to you, 'Let them be free! Marry them to your heirs! Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds be made as soft as yours and let their palates be seasoned with such viands'?
>
> "You will answer, 'The slaves are ours.'
>
> "So do I answer you. The pound of flesh which I demand of him is dearly bought. 'Tis mine and I will have it. If you deny me, fie upon your law."

Of Shylock's determination to extract the pound of flesh, Asimov writes:

> Remember this is a Jew's defense as placed in his mouth by someone not friendly to Jews. It is not, therefore, the most effective defense a Jew can make. Even so, the points are clear. Shylock does not claim to be better than a Christian. He merely claims to be no worse, and even in the context of the play, that gives him a great deal of room. Everyone in the play humiliates and torments him without conscience or remorse and nowhere at no time do they consider it wrong. Even the saintly Antonio sees no wrong there.
>
> Shylock, at least, recognizes villainy when he sees it. He admits his own plan to be villainous. His plan is that it has been taught him by Christians. In recognizing the villainy, he rises, in a way, an ethical notch above his tormenters.

I take two exceptions to Asimov's explanation, as I suspect Louise might have. First, we have no evidence that Shakespeare was not friendly to the Jews; Asimov simply presumes he was not. Shakespeare included no Jewish character in his other plays, so we have no evidence one way or another from his other writings. Shakespeare did, however, base his *Merchant of Venice* on Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, and we might consider Marlowe's treatment of his Jewish merchant for comparative insight.

Marlowe named his Jewish merchant Barabas, obviously after Barabbas, one of the most reviled Biblical characters. According to the New Testament, Pontius Pilate allowed the Jews to choose, between Barabbas and Jesus, who would be crucified. The Jews chose to spare Barabbas and thereby condemned Jesus to the cross.

Instead of adopting Marlowe's name, Shakespeare invented an entirely new name for his Jewish merchant, one far less likely to inspire animus from the audience.

Marlowe made his Jewish merchant evil in the extreme. Among his other villainies, Barabas arranged a doubly fatal duel between two young men (just previously friends), poisoned his own novice daughter (along with every other nun in the nunnery), strangled a priest, framed another priest for that murder (leading to the hanging of an innocent man), revealed a secret entryway into the city to Turkish invaders (who thereafter raped and pillaged), and schemed to double cross the Turkish leader by dropping him in a vat of boiling oil, only to be dropped in the vat himself.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, had his Jewish merchant commit not a single crime. Instead, Shylock was the victim of Christian perfidy. Shylock was the one falsely convicted of a crime by a fake judge during a rigged trial. Certainly Shylock sought revenge, and certainly he intended to extract his pound of flesh from Antonio's vitals, but Shylock believed he was acting according to the contract and the law, and no valid judge or court ever ruled otherwise.

And Shakespeare didn't drop Shylock into a pot of boiling oil, as was Barabas. Nor did Shakespeare have Shylock hanged, drawn, and quartered, as was Roderigo Lopez. Instead, Shakespeare left Shylock with half his wealth, to spend as he wished, with the remainder to go to his daughter when he died. More magnanimously, Shakespeare opened the door to Heaven for Shylock, at least in the eyes of the audience, by having him convert to Christianity.

I therefore suggest that it was improper of Asimov to ascribe anti-Jewish sentiment to Shakespeare simply because most Elizabethan Englishmen (and women) despised Jews. I suspect Louise saw a subtext in Shakespeare's plays, one of tolerance, one of common humanity. I suspect that in large measure because Louise incorporated the same subtext in her Sherlock adventures.

And that brings me to my second exception to Asimov's analysis. Recall that Asimov wrote:

> Shylock does not claim to be better than a Christian. He merely claims to be no worse ...

I would prefer that Asimov concluded, "Shylock claims to be no different than a Christian."

Egalitarianism is not a claim that all humans are equally bad. Nor is it a claim that we are all equally good. It is instead a claim that we are all equally human, each of us lying somewhere on a complex multi-dimensional spectra of strength and frailty, beauty and deformity, learning and ignorance, courage and cowardice, evil and nobility, etc. and etc., ad infinitum.

That's why I suspect Louise decided to ascribe the most unfavorable stereotypes of her day to her creation, to her Sherlock, as she carefully crafted and implemented her subtext argument that we are all equally human.