

Shylock in New York

Leonard Nathan, 2002

I met Shylock in my sleep
last night under the occult sign
of the three balls. "Grandfather,"
I cried, "man of many shadows,
is that you? If it is, I think
you have something for me, something
precious to be handed down
with love through generations,
wander where they will."

He merely shrugged, then smiling
a bitter archaic smile, reached
into a dark recess or pocket
of his gabardine and offered
me a stone redder than ruby,
harder than diamond. "Grief," he said.
"To suck if not to swallow,
and pass on. Enjoy."