



## I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano

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**Antonio:**

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

*The Merchant of Venice (I, i, 77-79)*

Reminiscent of the philosopher Jaque's speech in *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage,/And all the men and women merely players," this line is spoken by Antonio in an attempt to explain his recent melancholy to his friends. Gratiano has just opined that this sadness is linked to his worries about worldly possessions, a charge which Antonio (the Merchant in this play) vehemently denies. For his part, Gratiano states that his own role on the stage of life is as a fool, always laughing and chattering away. He goes on to criticize the people who are silent and wistful, stating that they act thus in order to give the impression that they are profound thinkers. He insinuates that Antonio is only pretending to be depressed. Antonio eventually vows to make an effort to talk more, and Gratiano is delighted to hear this, since silence is only commendable in a dried ox's tail or in an unmarriageable girl.

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