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Unheard Harmonies

The Merchant of Venice and the Lost Play of *Pythagoras*

Todd A. Borlik

Playwrights were concerned with company loyalty, parody, and imitation, and above all with fashion and box-office receipts. They studied the successes of rivals.

—Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life*

IN *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time*, Roslyn Knutson demonstrates that Elizabethan acting companies were—though modeled on late medieval guilds—unabashedly commercial enterprises. As such, they operated in a fashion not unlike Hollywood studios today. If an *Iron Man* rakes in big box office, moviegoers can not only expect the studio to swiftly bankroll a sequel but also a rival studio to greenlight a *Super Man* and rush it into production.¹ With the recent groundswell of repertory studies, literary critics have begun to recognize that a Shakespearean play-text must be viewed as the product of a competitive dramatic marketplace.² Play selection would be determined on the basis of what was currently fashionable and, therefore, likely to be profitable. The impact of the repertorial system on the production, content, and contemporary reception of Elizabethan drama would be difficult to overstate. Early modern playwrights often wrote in collaboration; they often tailored roles for certain personnel based on memorable parts they had performed in other plays; they often emulated other plays that had drawn large audiences; they often engaged in intellectual sparring with plays produced by other acting companies in the expectation that their audience had seen them. In theater history these statements have become more or less axiomatic. Armed with sophisticated attribution software, the disintegrationists have exposed Shakespeare's collaborations with Middleton, Wilkins, and Fletcher, and there is growing interest in Shakespeare as a Chamberlain's Man, as witnessed by Bart von Es's splendid new book *Shakespeare in Company*.³ Yet literary critics have been somewhat sluggish to pursue the implications of the final two premises outlined above. As Martin Wiggins remarks, "this easily demonstrable fact, that Shakespeare imitated other dramatists

just as often as they imitated him, often meets with resistance.”⁴ When critics do investigate what James Shapiro terms “competitive appropriation” in early modern English drama, they tend to fixate upon a handful of playwrights (Marlowe, Jonson, Middleton, Webster, Dekker), and dismiss the remaining repertory as unworthy of serious scrutiny. This paper contends that the study of repertorial competition has been warped not only by author-centric methodologies but also by the vagaries of playbook publication.⁵ The study of Elizabethan drama remains haunted by an embarrassing fact: the vast majority of plays (roughly 70–80 percent by some estimates) seen by Shakespeare and his contemporaries have not survived.⁶ By expanding the aperture of repertory studies to encompass the lost plays, this paper argues that “competitive appropriation” is far more pervasive and widespread than is generally understood. Playwrights did not wait for a rival company’s work to be printed before reacting to it. Taking the Admiral’s 1596 *Pythagoras* play as a test case, I hope to demonstrate that lost plays inter-mesh with—and can enrich our understanding of—extant texts by Shakespeare.

The much-hyped “War of the Theatres” has focused attention on the spat between the adult companies at the public playhouses and the boy companies at the private theaters.⁷ But from 1594–1600 a far more important rivalry simmered between the Chamberlain’s Men and the Admiral’s Men, the two chief acting companies licensed to perform in London during that time. In an important study, “Toe-to-Toe Across Maid Lane,” Knutson reveals how repertorial competition shaped the 1599–1600 theatrical season when the two troupes performed literally across the street from one another.⁸ This same pattern of cross-repertorial emulation can be detected even when the Chamberlain’s Men were still at the Theatre in Shoreditch. In *Shakespeare’s Opposites*, the first full-length monograph on the Admiral’s Men, Andrew Gurr establishes that Edward Alleyn and his colleagues were acutely aware of the offerings of the Chamberlain’s Men’s and vice versa:

What was written for each of them had to take note of what the other was doing. . . . Given the limited forms of public entertainment then available, regular attendance by the same people at the suburban playhouses where the two companies performed was inevitable. The reception by such self-renewing audiences of the plays at each of the only two venues invited cross-reference, both implicit and explicit. The plays written for the two companies up to 1600, especially the Admiral’s, give ample notice that writers and players alike expected a majority of their listeners to be familiar with the plays appearing on the otherside of the city.⁹

In the absence of modern intellectual property laws, writers could borrow liberally from each other without compunction. Even discounting the economic incentive, the emphasis on *imitatio* and debate in the early modern grammar school curriculum would have encouraged playwrights to mimic

characters, plotlines, and even poetic conceits in the works of their cross-town rivals,

Inventorying parallels in the extant play-texts of the two major Elizabethan acting companies proves to be a one-fingered exercise. To name just a few of the most glaring: in response to the successful revivals of *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon* (the latter featuring a conjuror from Oxford) at the Rose, the Chamberlain's Men produced a comedy about a magus from Cambridge in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*. As charming as the apocryphal tale is that Queen Elizabeth commissioned Shakespeare to write a play depicting "Falstaff in love," a more likely impetus for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was the Admiral's comedy *Two Angry Women of Abingdon*. Lady Falconbridge's confession of Philip's paternity in *King John* plays on the audience's knowledge of Richard's "long and vehement suit" (2.1.254) dramatized in the Admiral's play *Look About You*. Notoriously, the Admiral's Men would present two plays glorifying the proto-Protestant martyr Sir John Oldcastle whom Shakespeare had slandered in *Henry IV*. Perhaps the most infamous example of a cross-repertorial face off between the companies would be Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*—staged at the Rose by the Admiral's Men—and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*—performed at the Theatre by the Chamberlain's Men.¹⁰

Shakespeare scholars universally accept the formative influence of Marlowe's plays and blank verse on Shakespeare as a literary dramatist. Yet it is sometimes forgotten that little of Marlowe's work appeared in print during his lifetime. *The Jew of Malta*, an acknowledged catalyst for Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, was not published until 1633. Unless we propose that Shakespeare had access to the manuscripts of the rival company the only conclusion is that he became acquainted with this play by attending performances at the Rose. The fact that no documentary evidence survives proving that Shakespeare visited Henslowe's theater has not prohibited scholars from conjuring such a scene: "It seems indisputable," Russ McDonald asserts "that the young Shakespeare was enthralled by the Marlovian poetry he heard declaimed from the stage of the Rose."¹¹ Shakespeare must have gone to performances at the Rose. His active role in Elizabethan show business—as the triple threat of sharer, player, and playwright—would have demanded it. After all, his own journeyman plays (*Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*) were staged there in the early 1590s. Nor was Marlowe the only other playwright whose verse Shakespeare would have heard bellowed by Edward Alleyn and his colleagues.

While it is now de rigueur to read *The Merchant of Venice* as a counterblast to the *Jew of Malta*, less attention has been paid to the fact that in 1595 the Admiral's Company staged a popular comedy, *Knack to Know an Honest Man*, featuring a protracted trial scene in Venice in which two women intervene and plead for mercy. As Antonio does for Bassanio, multiple characters offer to die and sacrifice themselves to bail a loved one. A usurer—derided

as “the picture of true avarice”—is forced to relinquish his ill-gotten gains, which are declared forfeit to the state. As in the Jessica and Lorenzo subplot, the usurer’s virtuous daughter falls in love with one of her father’s enemies. While not a “source” in the traditional sense, the play is—as Tom Rutter has shown—an underappreciated influence on *Merchant of Venice*. *The Knack to Know an Honest Man* premiered in October 1594 and was still in the repertoire in November 1596.¹² In other words, it would have been running at the Rose while *Merchant of Venice* was simultaneously playing at the Theatre. A repertory approach to *The Merchant of Venice* thus helps account for its uncomfortable genre bending. An Elizabethan playgoer who frequented both playhouses would have perceived the Chamberlain’s play as a composite of the tragic farce *Jew of Malta* and the comic *Knack to Know an Honest Man*.

But there is yet another play that figures prominently in the Admiral’s 1596 repertoire that almost certainly influenced Shakespeare’s *Merchant*. Between January and July of 1596, Philip Henslowe’s *Diary* records that the Admiral’s Men gave twelve performances at the Rose of a new play entitled *Pythagoras*. Regrettably, the text is lost so we can only speculate about its contents. But there can be little doubt that it centered on the legendary pre-Socratic philosopher and would have imparted to playgoers a passing knowledge of at least some Pythagorean doctrines: music as an expression of cosmic harmony and a form of aural therapy instilling tranquility in the soul; the inaudible harmony of the spheres; numerical symbolism; mathematics as the key to decoding the order in nature; the sanctity of friendship; the sharing of property among friends and the willingness to die for one’s friend; the edifying benefits of foreign travel to comprehend the spiritual wisdom of diverse cultures; the metaphorical conception of life as a performance and the philosopher as audience; silence as a hallmark of wisdom; metempsychosis (or the transmigration of the soul); the fundamental kinship of all living things; and abstention from animal flesh. This essay argues that many of these Pythagorean ideals left their fingerprints on Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, a play written sometime between mid-1596 and 1597, shortly after the *Pythagoras* play premiered at the Rose.¹³

Because the *Pythagoras* play is lost such an argument will not sit well with those theater historians who, from a commendable zeal for documentary integrity, insist on facts and facts alone. Certainly, one has to tread carefully when wandering through this minefield, and any claims will inevitably need to be wrapped in a thick shroud of subjunctives. Yet to maintain that we can infer nothing about lost plays from the surviving titles seems a creed of sheer pessimism. Would anyone protest that the lost *Hercules* plays did not center on the famous Greek hero and his labors? Can we seriously doubt that the lost *Nebuchadnezzar* dealt with the infamous Babylonian tyrant? Would anyone challenge the assertion that the play Henslowe enters in his *Diary* as “hary the v” was a chronicle play based on the life and reign of that English king?

This approach, to be sure, would bear fruit only for a small percentage of the lost plays. Imagine for the moment that Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* never found its way into print. The only records of the play would come from Henslowe's ledgers. One might speculate (correctly) that a play with a Jewish protagonist revived in 1596 by Shakespeare's chief competitors influenced Shakespeare when he wrote a play with a Jewish protagonist later that same year. However, since Marlowe's tragedy lacks a clear source, the extent and nature of that influence would be murky.¹⁴ Similarly, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* owes something to another Admiral's play, *The Venetian Comedy*, performed ten times at the Rose between August 1594 and May 1595 (*HD* 23–28).¹⁵ But since its texts is lost and the title is so generic, whatever impact it may have had is indiscernible. Likewise, attempts to link Shakespeare's *Merchant* with a lost play entitled *The Jew* described by Stephen Gosson in his 1579 *School of Abuses* have proven to be unconvincing.¹⁶ Fortunately, in the test case I have chosen the eponymous subject of the lost play was a famous philosopher who left a massive wake in the documentary record of Elizabethan England. Sifting through these quotations and legends may permit us to form some rough but plausible conjectures as to the kind of material that could have furnished potential cues for the play of *Pythagoras*.

Speculating about lost plays is, admittedly, a hazardous pastime. Back in the 1880s F. G. Fleay advanced some highly suppositious claims about them and was lambasted by W. W. Greg.¹⁷ In 1926 Robert Boies Sharpe, basing his conjectures on his speculative thesis that the Admiral's Company was a propaganda machine for Burghley and the militant Protestant faction at court, made some similarly dubious suggestions about the Admiral's lost repertoire.¹⁸ Due to the conspicuous flaws in these two works, as well as New Criticism's fixation on close textual analysis, the subject of lost plays more or less vanished from the critical radar for much of the twentieth century. They resurfaced in 2009 when David McInnis and Roslyn Knutson launched the *Lost Plays Database (LPD)*, a Wiki-style online forum for compiling information about non-extant plays. McInnis and Knutson have done a tremendous service in helping restore the lost repertory to the critical conversation about early modern English drama. Now that the *LPD* is fulfilling the need for gathering and parading the archival evidence about these works, a challenging task yet remains. What do we do with the data on this database?¹⁹ The plot of *The Merchant of Venice* rewards those who hazard, an activity that brings obvious risks but also the potential for windfall gains. This statement is not intended to underwrite a policy of reckless conjecture. The ensuing pages make no claims to reconstruct in detail the plot of the *Pythagoras* play. However, since playwrights were in the habit of referring to and even emulating each other's work, it would be reasonable to search for clues about lost plays in contemporaneous plays that do survive. To suppose that the

ubiquitous pattern of cross-reference and meta-theatrical in-jokes was confined to extant play-texts would be absurd.

The inter-textuality in the repertoire of the two chief Elizabethan acting companies may be a puddle but it is, as Andrew Gurr has remarked, “a puddle worth stepping into.” A simple collation of some of the plays produced by the Admiral’s and Chamberlain’s Men during the late 1590s reveals some striking correspondences. In 1599 Thomas Dekker and Henry Chettle collaborated on a lost *Troilus and Cressida* play for the Admiral’s and Shakespeare would revamp the story in 1601. Every serious student of Elizabethan drama knows that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is indebted to Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* and the lost *Ur-Hamlet*; less well known is the fact that in 1599 the Admiral’s Company mounted a re-make of *Orestes furens* (HD 119) (now lost) about a half-crazed son’s quest to avenge the murder of his father by his mother’s lover. Shakespeare may have been randomly thumbing through his copy of Chaucer in 1595 when he decided to enfold the plot of *The Knight’s Tale* into a new comedy he was working on about English fairy lore. Or he may have been aware that the Admiral’s Men, his chief competitors in the London entertainment industry, had staged four performances of a play (now lost) entitled *Palamon and Arcite* (HD 24–25) between September and November 1594. Merely because Chaucer’s poem survives and the lost play does not, literary scholars regard the first scenario as a sound hypothesis while dismissing the second as irresponsible speculation.²⁰ In this nay-saying spirit, one could object that Shakespeare may have learned of Pythagoras from other sources. After all, this Greek sage speaks an unforgettable 430-line oration in Book 15 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, arguably Shakespeare’s favorite book. Given that Shakespeare never mentions Pythagoras prior to 1596, however, and then makes three explicit and a dozen implicit allusions to the philosopher in the years immediately after the *Pythagoras* play first appears in the Admiral’s repertoire, the evidence suggests otherwise. Besides the one direct allusion to Pythagoras in the trial scene, *The Merchant of Venice* includes—as this essay will unfold—no fewer than three additional references to Pythagorean doctrines. This presents us with two possible scenarios: 1) Shakespeare knew of Pythagoras independently, was oblivious or indifferent to the fact that a play about the philosopher was on the boards at the Rose, and that the sudden rash of erudite allusions to Pythagoras in his plays from this period are pure coincidence; or 2) Shakespeare, though he may have already been familiar with Pythagorean teachings, was inspired by the lost play to pepper his comedies with Pythagorean jokes and maxims, knowing they would elicit an added frisson of recognition and delight from Elizabethan playgoers acquainted with the Admiral’s play. The burden of the ensuing pages will be to argue that the latter scenario is by far the more likely.

Uncovering the Pythagoras play as an important intertext for one of Shakespeare’s most controversial works has several significant ramifications. First,

it furnishes further evidence of how pervasive cross-repertorial allusion was in the media ecology of Elizabethan drama. *The Merchant of Venice* draws on no fewer than three plays in the repertoire of a rival acting company. Secondly, by examining efforts of early modern humanists to reconcile the teachings of this pre-Socratic sage with Christianity, I will argue that Pythagorean philosophy occupied a position in Elizabethan England analogous to the ambiguous predicament of Judaism. Pythagorean lore has certain common denominators with Judaism (particularly the strand known as Kabbalah which fascinated Renaissance humanists): number mysticism, stringent dietary prohibitions, the belief in divine immanence, etc. If Pythagorean teachings can be assimilated into the worldview of Belmont, albeit somewhat selectively (as this essay will suggest), then *The Merchant of Venice* can be regarded more as a plea for syncretic spirituality than a triumphant homily on Christianity's superiority. On a commercial level, the play's synthesizing of diverse religions mirrors Shakespeare's handling of material in the repertoire of his rivals. Rather than invariably mock or satirize his competitors, Shakespeare finds legitimate inspiration in the work of the Admiral's playwrights—a group that included the likes of Marlowe, Chapman, Dekker, and Drayton. This essay thus seeks to qualify the misleading and overly dramatic metaphor of a “war” between the companies. Finally, the recovery of *Pythagoras* as a source for *Merchant of Venice* will hopefully serve as a *point d'appui* for the notion that lost plays merit critical attention. Puzzling over the critical neglect of *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, Barbara Traister concludes that critics remain too uncomfortable with anonymous plays and that author-centric approaches (despite the lip service paid to poststructuralist theory) continue to dominate the study of Renaissance drama.²¹ The lost plays have languished in an even darker limbo. Emboldened by the *Lost Plays Database (LPD)* and the information-gathering powers of the Digital Humanities, however, scholars are at last mustering the courage to venture into this cloud of unknowing. Matthew Steggle has published a recent monograph on lost plays and co-edited (along with David McInnis) a sterling collection of essays on the topic.²² These two books demonstrate that studies of non-extant drama, though unavoidably speculative, can be extremely suggestive when executed with tact and grounded in documentary evidence.

A crucial theme in *The Merchant of Venice* is the epistemological limitations of our sensory apparatus. “Mislike me not for my complexion” (2.1.1); “All that glisters is not gold” (2.7.65). It is, after all, the habit of judging by appearances that fosters prejudice toward cultural Others. Shakespeare plucks this chord again in act 5 when Lorenzo muses on the Pythagorean harmony of the spheres in a passage I will suggest took a cue from a play whose text does not survive. In the Renaissance, Pythagoras's theory of celestial harmony was the equivalent of the dog whistle today: it was a well-

known example of sounds existing outside the range audible to human ears. We cannot hear the dog whistle but we can see it blown and observe the dogs respond. Similarly, we cannot read lost plays, but we can, if we pay close attention, observe other playwrights respond to their stimulus. The twelve 1596 performances of *Pythagoras* recorded in Henslowe's ledgers are the dog whistle and the dozen or so ensuing allusions to the philosopher in Shakespeare's oeuvre constitute a response. Given the frequency with which surviving plays from the two companies' repertoires chime and resonate with one another, only an overly fastidious critic would deny the premise that Shakespeare's plays contain echoes of lost plays. Detecting these meta-theatrical reverberations (audible only to frequent playgoers of the day) was, I suspect, a big part of the fun of playgoing in early modern England. Due to the vagaries of play publication in the early modern era, which doomed so much of the repertoire to oblivion, we cannot hear most of them. But the harmonies are there. In a few rare cases, such as the *Pythagoras* play, we may detect some faint reverberations if we listen carefully enough.

* * *

With the possible exception of a few gnostic verses, Pythagoras's own writings (like the 1596 play performed at the Rose) do not survive. As a result, the impact of this monumental figure in Western thought has often been underestimated or misunderstood. Ancient writers report that Pythagoras only divulged his teachings to a brotherhood of disciples who were sworn not to reveal them to the uninitiated. Consequently, detailed, reliable knowledge of his life and doctrines died when the sect fizzled out a century and a half after the founder's death. Since no disciple recorded his teachings for posterity as Plato did for Socrates, Pythagoras's life would become encrusted with legends and his philosophy sophisticated by the work of later thinkers who sought to piggyback on his authority. In his landmark study *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Walter Burkert demonstrated the impossibility of disentangling Pythagoras' true teachings from the doctrines of the third-century neo-Platonists from whom most of our knowledge of him derives.²³ In the Renaissance, however, Pythagoras was credited with certain discrete contributions to philosophy. His contributions to mathematics and natural philosophy had a titanic impact not simply on scientific discourse but also, as S. K. Heninger has shown, on Renaissance poetics.²⁴ Several of these distinctively Pythagorean ideas are, I will argue, broached in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*.

Many early modern intellectuals seem to have regarded Pythagoras with intense ambivalence. Some admired him as a venerable sage who made earth-shaking discoveries in music and mathematics, developed a morally exemplary code of conduct, and believed in the soul's immortality. In almost the same breath, however, Pythagoras could be mocked as a magician or charla-

tan, a false prophet who posed as a messiah, and whose theology was tainted by absurd heterodox opinions such as the transmigration of the human soul into non-humans and vice versa. A typically vexed account of his life and legacy can be found in Thomas Cooper's 1565 *Thesaurus*:

[Pythagoras] was in sharpnesse of wit passing al other and found the subtile conclusions and misteries of Arithmetike, Musike, and Geometrie. Plato wondreth at his wisdom: his doctrine was diuine and compendious.²⁵

This is high praise. Yet Cooper's entry also includes the risible tale (derived from Iamblichus) in which Pythagoras instructs an ox not to eat beans, a bizarre dietary restriction that elicited much mockery as well as ingenious explanations from later commentators. Cooper also informs us that Pythagoras was rumored to be "expert in magyke." In the *Golden Verses*, a collection of cryptic maxims attributed to the philosopher (first Englished, incidentally, by the eighteenth-century Shakespearean Nicholas Rowe), Pythagoras instructs his followers to "honor likewise the terrestrial demons, rendering them the worship that is lawfully due them."²⁶ Such comments seem to have earned Pythagoras a reputation as a necromancer. This reputation would have been exacerbated by texts such as *A brefe and pleasaunte worke, and science of the phelosopher Pictagoras* (c.1560?), which invokes the pre-Socratic philosopher as an authority on astrological and numerological divination.²⁷

Pythagoras was painted in similarly lurid colors on the popular stage prior to 1596. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (one of several magus plays in the Admiral's repertoire), the sorcerer Vandermast invokes Pythagoras alongside Hermes Trismegistus and Melchie, as "cabalists that write of magic spells."²⁸ This not only associates Pythagoras with occult magic but also with Jewish Kabbalah (of which more later). Notoriously, in *Doctor Faustus* the eponymous conjuror wishes his soul could transmigrate into an animal's body rather than suffer eternal damnation: "Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis" (A 5.2.107). Given the prominence of Marlowe's work in the Admiral's repertory, it is possible that this moment (or the nod to Machevill's metempsychosis in the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*) supplied an impetus for the lost play.²⁹ Pythagoras himself has a cameo in Lyly's *Endymion* (c. 1591), in which he defers to the wisdom of Cynthia—a thinly veiled portrait of the Queen—and recants his heretical teachings. Thomas Nashe mentions Pythagoras projecting images on the moon in his *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (c. 1593). These allusions implicate Pythagoras with occult science, raising the odds the lost play would have trafficked in magical spectacle. Finally, when *Pythagoras* was unveiled in the mid-1590s, the Admiral's repertoire featured a number of magus and devil plays. The play premiered in 1596, when *The Wiseman of Westchester* was in the midst of a successful run at the

Rose. Pythagoras may have been presented as another such “wise man” or conjuror in the mold of Faustus or Friar Bacon.

Apart from Coöper’s classical dictionary, the possible source texts consulted by the author or authors of the *Pythagoras* play have yet to be considered. The list is a short one. Pythagoras does deliver a memorable lecture in Book 15 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Ovid’s account, however, is rather skimpy in terms of biographical detail. He mentions Pythagoras’s detestation of the tyrant Polycrates, his self-imposed exile in Croton, and his (historically impossible) advising of King Numa. Perhaps these could have furnished a crude outline for the narrative. But the bulk of the speech is a redaction of key tenets of Pythagoras’s moral and natural philosophy: vegetarianism, the transmigration of the soul (metempsychosis), the nature of the four elements, and mutability (the paradox of constant change). Philosophy lectures do not, as a rule, make for gripping drama on stage. So Ovid may merely have imparted a basic knowledge of Pythagorean doctrine, which the playwright(s) could have spun out into any number of conceivable plots.

Perhaps the most accessible biography of Pythagoras in Elizabethan England would be the one found in William Baldwin’s *Treatise of Moral Philosophy, Contayning the Sayings of the Wise*. The book includes over two dozen maxims of Pythagoras, as well as a four-page vita chronicling some of his most famous deeds and proverbs: his travels abroad, his discovery of music, his coining the word “philosopher,” his analogy between a philosopher and a spectator at a public games, his scorning of riches and meat, and his sect’s idealization of friendship. First published in 1547, Baldwin’s book was reprinted five times prior to 1591, and a sixth edition appeared in 1596—the same year *Pythagoras* premiered at the Rose. Baldwin’s treatise was thus one of the most popular reference works in early modern England. As over half of it consists of proverbial sayings and philosophical epigrams on various subjects from famous Greek and Roman thinkers, *Sayings of the Wise* was in fact something like a Tudor equivalent of Bartlett’s *Quotations*.³⁰ Of all of Shakespeare’s plays, *The Merchant of Venice* seems the most concerned with the use and abuse of proverbial “sayings of the wise.” Portia mocks Nerissa’s “Good sentences” (1.2.10), and comments on the futility of such moral aphorisms: “the brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o’er a cold decree” (1.2.17–18). Similarly, Antonio warns Bassanio, “the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose” (1.3.96). The play’s skepticism about proverbs can be regarded as part of its critique of Judaism. After all, the Hebrew Bible features a Book of Proverbs (of which chapters 22–24 are known as the “Sayings of the Wise”). Shylock, moreover, is fond of citing them: “fast bind, fast find, a proverb never stale in thrifty mind” (2.5.53–54). From a repertorial perspective, however, the *Merchant of Venice* may also be responding to a portrait of Pythagoras as a fountainhead for such adages and injunctions in a lost play by Shakespeare’s rivals. As the remainder of this

essay will unfold, several maxims, teachings, and parables Baldwin attributes to this philosopher crop up in Shakespeare's post-1596 plays. Given the chronological proximity of the Admiral's *Pythagoras* play to Shakespeare's *Merchant* and the growing critical consensus about cross-repertorial emulation in Elizabethan drama, these allusions cannot be a coincidence.

* * *

In the opening scene of *Merchant*, a number of Pythagorean ideas cluster around the character of Antonio. When the other Venetians inquire as the reasons for his sadness, Antonio responds that he has been cast in the role of the melancholic:

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

(1.1.77–79)

While many scholars simply dismiss the world-as-stage metaphor as a trite commonplace, it is often forgotten that this aphorism was coined by Pythagoras. The phrase first appears in Iamblichus's biography of the philosopher, which claims Pythagoras "likened the entrance of men into the present life to the progression of a crowd to some public spectacle."³¹ In Baldwin's *Treatise of Moral Philosophy*, Pythagoras ruminates, "Man's life seemeth to me to be like a company of people gathered to see a game." Some (the rulers and courtiers) flock there to perform, a great many (the merchants) to buy and sell, and a wise minority (the philosophers) come simply to observe and learn. Eventually, English translations of this parable (or "semblable," as Baldwin terms it) would morph the Greek "Games" into the more familiar spectacle of the stage. In the Elizabethan comedy *Damon and Pythias* (c. 1564), the titular heroes and friends profess themselves to be devotees of the Pythagorean brotherhood, and the former explicitly attributes the phrase to the sect's founder. Shortly after their arrival in Syracuse, Damon reminds his companion of the reason for their journey:

Pythagoras said that this world was like a stage
Whereon many play their parts. The lookers-on the sage
Philosophers are, says he, whose part is to learn
The manners of all nations, and the good from the bad to discern.³²

The conceit of the world as a stage circulated widely in Elizabethan literature; to be sure, Shakespeare could have encountered it in a dozen different sources such as Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, Montaigne's essay "Of husbanding your will," or Thomas Newton's prefatory verses to *The Mirrour of Magistrates* (a text originally edited by Baldwin).³³ It is worth remarking, however, that

this comparison never occurs in his plays prior to 1596. In the years after *Pythagoras* was performed at the Rose, Shakespeare suddenly finds this an irresistible analogy. In addition to *The Merchant of Venice*, he famously likens the world to stage in *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and his theater company is even believed to have adopted it as the motto for the Globe.³⁴ Many London playgoers, however, may have first heard some variation of the famous phrase uttered not at the Theatre or Globe, but at the Rose by the eponymous philosopher of the lost *Pythagoras* play.

The author or authors of *Pythagoras* may very well have known of Richard Edwards' comedy *Damon and Pythias*, which does survive. A quarto of the play was printed in 1571 and a second edition appeared in 1582. The story lingered in the memory of the London theater world long afterward, judging by Ben Jonson's spoof of it in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). In fact the Admiral's Men staged a re-make of this old play not long after *Pythagoras*. Between February and May 1600 Henslowe made five payments totaling £6 to Henry Chettle for a "Damon and Pythias" (63, 131, 133).³⁵ Shakespeare, too, was acquainted with this story. In *Hamlet* (written around the same time as Chettle's play), the Prince addresses Horatio as "Damon dear" (3.2.258) in what is probably another cross-repertorial allusion to a lost play.

Celebrated by Cicero and again by Thomas Elyot in his *Book Named the Governor* (1531, reprinted 1580), the tale of Damon and Pythias was a familiar exemplum in Elizabethan England of what critics now call homosocial friendship. When the Syracusan tyrant sentences Pythias to death, the Pythagorean requests permission to go home briefly to settle his affairs. His friend and fellow Pythagorean Damon—with whom "he had all things in common" (Guthrie 113)—stands as surety, and agrees to be bound to die in Pythias's place if he fails to return on the appointed day of his execution. When Pythias is delayed, Damon prepares himself to die, and bids a tender farewell to his absent friend. Just before the fatal blow, Pythias returns. Moved by their devotion, the tyrant Dionysius pardons them both and asks to be admitted into the Pythagorean order.

The saga of Damon and Pythias has a conspicuous resemblance to the predicament of Antonio and Bassiano. According to Diogenes Laertius, Pythagoras was the first person to declare "the property of friends is common" (Guthrie 144). Antonio's liberality to his friend—"My purse, my person, my extremest means / Lie all unlocked to your occasions" (1.1.138–39)—reflects the communal ownership of goods practiced by the brotherhood and their willingness to sacrifice their lives for one another. The same can be said of his refusal to take interest: "for when did friendship take a breed for barren metal of his friend?" (1.3.131–32). Antonio's comportment during the trial recalls that of Pythias in that he refuses to blame his friend as he faces execution, and instead glories in the opportunity to prove his devotion. His willingness to be bound as a surety and die for Bassanio's debts is not simply an

analogue for Christ's sacrifice, but of the Pythagorean veneration of friendship-unto-death.

Antonio is further portrayed as a Pythagorean in the first scene by virtue of his taciturn demeanor. Pythagoras appears to be one of the first Western thinkers to have practiced silent meditation.³⁶ In the *Treatise of Moral Philosophy*, William Baldwin attributes the following maxims about the virtues of silence to Pythagoras:

By silence, the discretion of man is known; and a fool keeping silence seemeth wise.
Much hurt hath grown of speech; but never none of silence.

A fool is known by his speech and a wise man by silence. (103)
He is wise and discreet that can refrain his tongue. (141)

Baldwin does allege a number of other ancient authorities testifying (paradoxically) for silence, but early moderns considered this virtue almost synonymous with Pythagoras. One of the most notorious practices of the Pythagorean community was the quinquennial silence. Before he would reveal his most sacred teachings, Pythagoras compelled his disciples to undergo a five-year probationary period during which they were not permitted to speak. The custom is avouched by Iamblichus (Guthrie 73–74), and is mentioned in several Tudor accounts of Pythagoras, including Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurs*:

[Pythagoras's] doctrine was diuine and compendious: the which he teachynge to other[s], enioyned them to keepe silence fieve years, and heare him diligentlye, ere they demaunded of him any question.

The boisterous, loudmouthed Graziano would obviously find such a practice intolerable. He reprimands Antonio for his gravity, scoffing at pseudo-intellectuals who never speak in order to gain a reputation for wisdom:

There are a sort of men whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
And do a willful stillness entertain
With purpose to be dressed 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.'

(1.3.88–94)

What "sort of men" does Graziano have in mind? A footnote in the Arden edition cites Exodus 11:7: "But among all the children of Israel, shall not a dog move his tongue . . . that ye may know how the Lord putteth a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."³⁷ Many Elizabethans did, of course, know

large swathes of the Torah by heart. However, it is also a reasonable hypothesis that Graziano has just seen the *Pythagoras* play at the Rose, and more importantly, so had a large number of Shakespeare's audience. In the remainder of his speech, Graziano professes to "know" of such melancholy poseurs:

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.

(1.1.95–99)

As Pythagoras's followers were known as "brothers," observed prolonged silences, and consequently enjoyed a reputation for wisdom, these lines carry a subtle jab at this philosophical sect, a sect that happens to have been portrayed in a contemporaneous play by Shakespeare's chief theatrical rivals. Antonio's taciturnity, then, may not be strictly Jewish but also Pythagorean. Or rather, it would be more accurate to frame Graziano's speech as one of several occasions in which Shakespeare's play points to a convergence between Pythagorean philosophy and Judaism.

Graziano's familiarity with Pythagoras is made explicit during the trial scene. When Shylock refuses to deface the bond, Graziano questions his humanity by invoking Pythagoras's most infamous heresy: the transmigration of the soul.

Thou almost mak'st me wave in my faith
To hold opinion with Pythagoras
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men.

(4.1.129–32)

This marks the first of three direct references to Pythagoras in Shakespeare's writings.

Shakespeare makes another overt allusion to the Greek sage in *As You Like It* when Rosalind cracks wise about her prior life as a rat in "Pythagoras' time" (3.2.173). The third occurs in *Twelfth Night*, when Feste quizzes the imprisoned Malvolio on "Pythagoras's opinion concerning wildfowl" (4.2.44). In the topsy-turvy spirit of festive comedy, he declares him insane until he resolves never to kill a bird "lest he dispossess the soul of [his] grandam" (4.2.50). Commentators understandably gloss these lines by pointing to Pythagoras's speech in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It might, however, also be worth mentioning that a *Pythagoras* play was staged at the Rose twelve times during the first six months of 1596.

Along with *Merchant*, the *Pythagoras* play exerted a pronounced influence on *As You Like It*. Rosalind's joke about her prior life as a rat in "Pythagoras time" is relatively obscure. It requires the hearer instantaneously to associate the philosopher's name with metempsychosis while at the same time equating the adjective "Irish" with legends that that nation's bards could rhyme to death. On a cognitive level, Shakespeare's audience would have trouble grasping the jest unless the concept of metempsychosis were fresh in their minds. In other words, this lame witticism only becomes comprehensible—and more importantly funny—in the context of a *Pythagoras* play performed at the Rose. No wonder the line is often cut from modern productions. But the Pythagorean allusions do not stop there. Earlier in the same play, Celia cites the Pythagorean adage that friendship makes two into one (1.3–95–96) [cf. Baldwin 94]. The Duke addresses his companions as "brothers in exile" (2.1.1), a phrase that recalls the exile of Pythagoras and his brotherhood of followers that had fled Greece and settled in Italy. The Duke later references the Pythagorean belief in the music of the spheres (2.7.6), a doctrine also alluded to by Olivia in *Twelfth Night* (3.1.109). The cerebral Jaques exhibits some marked Pythagorean tendencies: he denounces the hunt and equates it with political tyranny, just as the Greek sage denounced blood sport and meat eating and defied the tyrant Polycrates. Like Pythagoras, Jaques praises silence. He also seeks solitude, and at the end of the play decides to retire to a "cave" like the one Pythagoras is reported to have inhabited. Finally, Jaques' most famous line—"All the world's a stage"—is a twist on the same Pythagorean maxim cited in the preceding pages.

Not every passing reference to a character from a Rose play is a cross-repertorial allusion. Jonson's "Masque of Pythagoras" in *Volpone* (performed by the King's Men in 1605) appears almost a decade after the Admiral's *Pythagoras* premiered and was probably modeled on a skit in Lucan rather than the lost play. Nevertheless, such references could still have unwittingly stirred memories of the old *Pythagoras* play amongst audience members who had seen it. Mapping out the allusions to Pythagoras in Shakespeare's oeuvre, it becomes apparent that he develops a sudden interest in the philosopher around 1596, shortly after the first record of a *Pythagoras* play in Henslowe's *Diary*. The persistence of allusions to this Greek sage in Shakespeare's writing up until 1601 can be best explained, I think, by the likelihood that the lost play was revived. On 16 May 1598, Henslowe lent the Admiral's Men seven pounds to purchase five playbooks from Martin Slater; among them was "pethagores" (89). This purchase is attested by a second, separate playhouse inventory among Henslowe's papers (324). It is highly unlikely the company would have purchased the playbook unless they had plans to revive it. Other plays on the list, such as *Hercules*, were definitely revived, as the *Diary* records loans to purchase additional costumes. Since Henslowe ceased listing the titles of individual plays next to his box-office

takings after November 1597, *Pythagoras* could very well have remained part of the Admiral's repertoire after this date. If this play were still on the boards in 1599, as seems likely, it would have been staged at the Rose directly across the street from the new Globe. Is it any surprise that Shakespeare's plays from 1599–1601 include so many allusions to Pythagorean philosophy?

* * *

Due to the understandable interest in the history of early modern anti-Semitism, studies of *The Merchant of Venice* have primarily focused on the "Jewish Question." Rather than distract from this inquiry, recovering the Pythagorean dimensions of the *Merchant of Venice* can help further illuminate it. In fact, I will argue that the Pythagorean elements in act 5 are absolutely instrumental to the play's dubious attempt to achieve a comic resolution.

Shakespeare's decision to interject Pythagorean lore into a problem comedy about religious tensions between Jews and Christians will seem less puzzling after a brief survey of what is known as "pristine theology." Trained in typology, sixteenth-century humanists often sifted through both Jewish and classical texts for their anticipations of Christian dogma. It is telling that Thomas Cooper's biography of Pythagoras concludes with his chronological emplacement in relation to Jesus: "He was before the incarnation of Christ. 522 yeares" (sig.O7.Ii r–v). Like Moses and the Jewish prophets, Pythagoras was a precursor of Christ, and some of his doctrines would be selectively assimilated with Christian theology. Early modern divines could cite Pythagoras with approbation as an ancient seer who believed in the immortality of the soul. To be sure, not all of his teachings could be easily digested. But by interpreting Pythagoras's heretical doctrine of the animal soul in symbolic terms, early modern humanists managed to reconcile his philosophy with Christianity. The Elizabethan Puritan Arthur Golding, for instance, hails Pythagoras as a proto-Christian seer in the prefatory epistle to his translation of Ovid.³⁸

Many early modern humanists also perceived startling correspondences between Pythagoreanism and Judaism. Mention has already been made of the passage in Greene's *Friar Bacon* in which Pythagoras is identified as a "cabalist." The pre-Socratic philosopher, it turns out, looms large in many Renaissance texts on Kabbalah. This brand of Jewish mysticism is an exceptionally complex topic and a thorough investigation of it is beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say, one of its most notorious elements is Gematria—the esoteric practice of assigning words or phrases numerical values. As many early modern humanists perceived, Gematria dovetailed neatly with the numerological mysticism of the Pythagoreans. One of the most enthusiastic admirers of Pythagoras in the Renaissance was Johann Reuchlin, whose philosemitism earned him the nickname "Rabbi Capnion." His *De*

arte calabistica “equated Kabbalah with Pythagoreanism” in a series of Ciceronian dialogues between a Jew, a Pythagorean, and a Muslim.³⁹ In his “Oration on the Dignity of Man,” Pico della Mirandola continued this effort to synthesize Jewish mysticism and Pythagorean philosophy. He points to passages about bodily transformations (*gilgul*) in Hebraic texts and likens them to the Greek seer’s belief in metempsychosis. Reading the occult books of Kabbalah, Mirandola was startled “to hear Pythagoras and Plato, whose principles are so closely related to the Christian faith.”⁴⁰ Curiosity about Jewish Kabbalah also ran high alongside interest in Pythagoras amongst some Elizabethan Puritans. *The Alchemist* spoofs the Puritan Hugh Broughton’s *Concent of Scripture* (1590), which Jonson depicts as “call[ing] the rabbins and the heathen Greeks” together and endorsing divination through the “ancient communion of vowels and consonants. . . a wisdom which Pythagoras held most high.”⁴¹

In addition to a fascination with sacred numbers, both religious sects had stringent prohibitions against spilling and consuming blood. Notoriously, Pythagoras taught that both humans and non-humans possess a soul and are linked in a common spiritual ecology. He thus became the first Western thinker to denounce hunting and to preach abstention from animal flesh. Just as Ovid’s Pythagoras urges readers to eschew “bloody foode” (15.93), Leviticus 7:26–27 and 17:10 forbid consuming bloody food on the grounds that the life or soul of an animal resides in the blood. Consequently, Jewish dietary laws, known as the *Kashrut*, stipulate that the blood must be drained from beef and poultry before it is eaten. This may, incidentally, be an important reason why Shylock overlooks this loophole in the bond for his pound of flesh: a Kosher butcher would have already removed the blood before the meat would be carved. Though it does not enjoin vegetarianism, Orthodox Judaism does prohibit hunting as un-Kosher, and outlaws certain meats such as pork. Shylock, in fact, glances at this dietary prohibition twice in the play. In refusing the invitation Bassanio’s dinner party, he insists he will not “eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into!” (1.3.31–32). He again hints at Jewish dietary customs during the trial scene when he imagines a person who “cannot abide a gaping pig” (4.1.53). These dietary observances may have encouraged some early modern Christians to associate Pythagoreanism with Judaism. Finally, Kabbalah and Pythagoreanism share a belief in an immanent Deity, that God’s presence pervades the material world, and that soul abides within all living things.

Ancient biographies of Pythagoras supply an explanation for why his teachings align with Judaism. According to Porphyry, Pythagoras studied not only with the Chaldeans and Egyptians but also with the Hebrews (Guthrie 125). Iamblichus reports that Pythagoras, on his way to Egypt from Samos, made a long stopover in Phoenicia where he “conversed with the prophets who were the descendents of Moschus [Moses]” (Guthrie 60). In the Renais-

sance, these details not escape the attention of the Florentine neo-Platonist Marsilio Ficino. Ficino proposed the existence of an ancient pristine theology “handed down through the Jewish patriarchs through Moses to the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, and then through a series of initiates to Pythagoras, who took it to Greece.”⁴² Eventually, Pythagoras would bring his teachings to Italy, but the school he founded would have a profound impact on Plato, and Platonic metaphysics would shape Christianity through Paul and Augustine. Pythagoras, in other words, was a religious figure of monumental stature. Today he would be labeled a cosmopolitan thinker, who sought to gather and synthesize the spiritual breakthroughs that occurred during what historians of religion now refer to as the Axial Age. Since he lived after Moses and before Christ, Pythagoras both chronologically and intellectually represented a theological bridge spanning the Jewish, pagan, and Christian dispensations.

With its insistence on common spiritual ground between different faiths, syncretic philosophy would seem to herald the discourse of religious tolerance in early modern Europe. Syncretic philosophy does not, however, underlie the most celebrated plea for tolerance in Renaissance literature: the “Hath not a Jew eyes?” speech from the *Merchant of Venice*. Shylock bases his argument on shared corporeal experience of the world—susceptibility to pleasure and pain, heat and cold, laughter and sorrow, and, of course, mortality. Shylock does mention common “affections” and the speech culminates in the declaration that Jews resemble Christians in their capacity for indignation and corresponding desire for revenge. But the emphasis is on the sensory rather than the spiritual faculties of human beings. In the Caskets plot and later at Belmont, it is the Pythagorean contempt for the senses and the body, what Lorenzo calls “the muddy vesture of decay” (5.1.64) that ultimately unites this pre-Socratic philosophy with Christianity. The fact that the Gentiles in *The Merchant of Venice* establish the Pythagorean heritage of their faith while Shylock does not contributes to Christianity’s apparent triumph over Judaism in Shakespeare’s play. Significantly, the play evokes Shylock’s deafness to *prisca theologia* through his dislike of the Pythagorean art of music.

* * *

After the harsh clamors of the trial scene, *Merchant of Venice* returns to Belmont where Lorenzo delivers a celebrated speech to his Jewish bride Jessica on the inaudible harmony of the spheres.

Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
There’s not the smallest orb which thou behold’st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubins.

Such harmony is in immortal souls,
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

(5.1.57–65)

This is the fourth distinctively Pythagorean teaching aired in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespearean source-hunters have not struggled to unearth analogues for Lorenzo's oration. In the Variorum edition of the play, H. H. Furness presents several possible candidates: the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*, Montaigne's essay "On Custom," Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, and Job 38:7.⁴³ The Third Arden edition questions the identification with Job since the parallels are only evident in the 1611 Authorized Version, and instead adds John Davies' "A Hymne in Prayse of Musicke." One source that has not been mentioned is a 1596 play featuring the very philosopher whose name was synonymous with the harmony of the spheres

Invoking Pythagoras, the syncretic philosophers of the Renaissance often figuratively describe doctrinal resemblances amongst religious faiths in terms of musical "harmony." This conceit is particularly pronounced in *De harmonia mundi*, a 1525 religio-philosophical poem composed by Francesco Giorgi (or Zorzi), a friar from Venice. In 1975, Daniel Banes argued that Giorgi's poem must be the primary inspiration for Lorenzo's speech. This thesis would be given the glowing imprimatur of Frances Yates in her classic *Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*: "surely the influence of the Friar of Venice lies behind this scene, the influence of the famous Christian Cabalist."⁴⁴ Now it is of course possible that Shakespeare read an esoteric work written in Latin and published in Venice in 1525. Perhaps he had access to a French translation or to a copy in John Dee's library, as Banes and Yates respectively propose. It is far more probable, however, that Shakespeare was acquainted with a play about Pythagoras performed in English in London by his chief theatrical rivals in 1596, the year he wrote *Merchant of Venice*. The "harmony of the spheres" is, after all, not a Kabbalistic doctrine but a Pythagorean one.

In his seminal reading of this scene, Lawrence Danson points to Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Boethius's *De Institutione Musica* as possible analogues for Lorenzo's *musica universalis*. Despite the speech's classical pedigree, Danson shrewdly remarks on Lorenzo's use of the word "patens" (sacramental dishes used in Holy Communion) as a give-away as to its theological agenda: "a congeries of ideas with good pagan foundations is made explicitly Christian."⁴⁵ In much of the syncretic philosophy of the Renaissance, Christianity emerges triumphant by absorbing the doctrines of its predecessors. Arguably, this same pattern unfolds in *The Merchant of Venice*. Lorenzo's speech thus appears to signal Jessica's conversion. While Danson advances a compelling reading, the existence of a *Pythagoras* play at the

Rose requires that we reconsider the thrust of this scene. If at least some portion of Shakespeare's audience had heard a pre-Socratic philosopher utter a similar monologue in a contemporaneous play by the Admiral's Men, they may have been more attune to the pagan overtones of Lorenzo's speech rather than its Christian ones. Shakespeare's audience would hear harmonies that modern audiences do not.

By interpolating language about patens and cherubins, Shakespeare appears to Christianize pagan ideas; alternatively, perhaps the lost Admiral's play had already presented a Christianized Pythagoras. It is impossible to say. In order to gauge Shakespeare's intentions we would have to be able to hear Pythagoras's inaudible speech from a non-extant play. The theory that the lost play even featured a speech about *musica universalis* is of course speculative. In light of the other evidence compiled in this essay, however, it is not just plausible, but highly probable. All three of Shakespeare's plays that mention Pythagoras by name also invoke the Pythagorean teaching of the music of spheres: (*MOV* 5.1.57–65; *AYLI* 2.7.6; *TN* 3.1.109). The dates of these plays overlap with the dates of the lost play's premiere and likely revival.

If the lost play included a lecture on the music of the spheres, did it also feature Pythagoras's legendary discovery of musical harmony? Again, that question cannot be answered with certainty. But early modern histories concerning the origins of music do have a surprising connection with Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. The discovery is indisputably one of the most famous episodes in Pythagoras's biography. It is recounted in many early modern texts, including Baldwin's *Treatise of Moral Philosophy*. One of the most elaborate accounts can be found in Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*. First printed by Caxton in 1482 and reissued in 1495 and 1528, Higden's *Polychronicon* was highly regarded by Reformation historians, and served as an important source for the chronicles of Holinshed and Camden. Some of the playwrights who worked for Henslowe would have been acquainted with the *Polychronicon*. Drayton imitated the title in his own chorographical epic *Poly-Olbion*. Higden himself actually appears on stage as a choric figure in Thomas Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent*. Here is Higden's account of Pythagoras' discovery of music, cited from John Trevisa's English translation:

It happed that Pythagoras passed forth openly and herd smythes bete with hamers on hote yron & acorde eueryche to other in certayne ordre of sowne. For the sharpe sowne acorded to the grete and made the smythes to chaunge hamers, but the same acorde of sownyng folowed alway Than he toke hede that the hamers were of dyuse weyght and bade hym make greter hamers And from hamers he tornede hym to examyne strenges and streyned guttes and senewes of shepe and of beestes fastned to dyuerse weyghtes such weyghtes as he founden in the hamer and hadde suche

song and acorde as the rather acordynge of hamers made with swetnesse of kyndly sowne of strenges. Than whan he was connyng of so gret pryuate he began to fynde nombres by the whiche sownes acorde and so he spedde to make the craft of musik.⁴⁶

But Pythagoras is not the only person credited with the discovery of music. Other early modern sources report that it was a Jewish descendant of Cain by the name of Tubal, who first discerned a melodic pattern in the beating of hammers. John Merbecke's 1581 *Booke of Notes and Common Places* records how "Tubal, the sonne of Ada, inuented the science of Musick, by the stroke and noise of hammers of his brother Tubalkain which was a Smith."⁴⁷ Such reports generated understandable confusion between Pythagoras and Tubal. Higden, for instance, mentions their conflicting claims to the discovery:

Though men rede that Tubal of caines lygnage was fynder of consonancye and of music bfore Noes flode Netheles me redeth among the Grekes that Pycthagoras founde the craft of musik~ by sowne of hamers and by stretchyng of cordes and of strenges. (203)

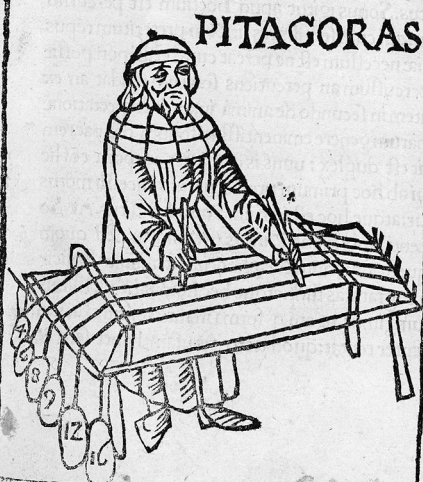
Other early modern sources fused the separate traditions. An English song composed in the 1530s imagines the first music forged, as it were, by "Tubals hammers, by Pictagoras contryuyng,"⁴⁸ Franchino Gafori's *Theorica musice* (1492) likewise depicts Tubal alongside Pythagoras as co-discoverers of musical harmony. (See Figure 1.)

The similarities between the figures in this crude woodcut are striking. Without the captions, a viewer might be forgiven for asking the question: Which is the Greek philosopher here, and which the Jew?

Of course there is no hard evidence that the discovery of musical notation was staged in the lost play, much less credited to Tubal. But it is curious that the name Shakespeare chose for Shylock's companion had an association with Pythagoras and music. Shakespeare's choice of this name is not likely to be arbitrary. It is a reminder that if Shylock does not care for music, other figures in the Jewish faith could hear harmonies.

* * *

To conclude, I would like to point to the first surviving piece of literary criticism about Shakespeare, which just so happens to link him with Pythagoras. In *Palladis Tamia*, Francis Meres employs metempsychosis as a trope for literary influence: "As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweette wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honytongued Shakespeare." (282).⁴⁹ The allusion further attests to the familiarity of Pythagoras in the late 1590s; it also illustrates how his heretical doctrine could be repurposed to undermine both the singularity of the Author and the



inviolability of the subject. Eager to tout the prestige of English drama as rivaling the ancients, Meres imagines Shakespeare as an avatar of Ovid. But Shakespeare is just as likely to have been inspired by the drama of his living contemporaries. This influence radiated not just from Marlowe, but also from minor playwrights whose work is now lost to us. This article detects no fewer than four verbal echoes of Pythagorean doctrine that Shakespeare likely heard in the lost play by an anonymous playwright. Tellingly, *The Merchant of Venice* contains (as Robert Logan observes) only a single unambiguous verbal parallel with Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*: "my girl, my gold" which echoes in Shylock's "My daughter! O, my ducats! O, my daughter!" (2.8.15). Confronted with this dearth of evidence, critics have resorted to Bloomian readings of the anxiety of influence; "it as if Shakespeare were trying to conceal the intensity of his own indebtedness to Marlowe."⁵⁰ Henslowe's ledgers tell a different story: in the first half of 1596, *The Jew of Malta* was an old play and received eight performances; *Pythagoras* was a new play and received twelve.

Like Meres, literary critics have been eager to ferret out prestigious literary sources for Shakespeare. Modern academics who spend much of their time in the library have no problems imagining Shakespeare as an impossibly voracious reader. Perhaps in whatever downtime he had as a playwright, actor, and sharer overseeing the operations of the Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare managed to read at lightning speed the several thousand books that source-hunters have claimed he did. An alternative explanation, which this article supports, is that much of Shakespeare's reading was probably done for him by other playwrights. Shakespeare lifted at second hand many of his ideas, metaphors, characters, plotlines, and philosophical visions from other plays that were popular at the time. The "Anglo-Saxon superstition" (to borrow Melville's phrase) of regarding the Bard as a literary genius of unparalleled magnitude has perhaps hindered scholars from recognizing the highly derivative nature of Shakespearean drama. To Shakespeare's contemporaries, however, derivativeness was not a dirty word. Rather it was a sign of being *au courant*. In light of the evidence presented here about the indebtedness of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* to the plays of the Admiral's Men, the term "competitive appropriation" mentioned earlier in this essay may be a tad anachronistic; it hinges on notions of intellectual property that were not quite codified in the 1590s.⁵¹ Viewed through the lens of Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, the Elizabethan repertorial system begins to look like the "Creative Commons" of the brave new online world.⁵² It is therefore fitting that online technologies such as *Early English Books Online* and the *Lost Plays Database* may enable us to piece together a crisper picture of this repertory than was possible just a decade or so ago.

Because of the cultural investment in Shakespeare's unique genius and the corresponding disparagement of the Admiral's authors as hacks, because of

the critical prejudice against viewing literary artists—even a sharer like Shakespeare—as embroiled in a competitive show-business atmosphere (as if these were mutually exclusive), because literary scholars privilege verbal texts over performance, because good old Anglo-American empiricism compels theatre historians to cling to the documentary record, the profound synergy between the Rose and the Theatre has not received the critical attention it warrants. Studies by Roslyn Knutson, Andrew Gurr, and Tom Rutter stand as notable exceptions. Their work has begun to reveal a pervasive pattern of cross-referencing in the extant plays of the two companies. This pattern must hold true for unpublished plays as well. Again, caution is of paramount importance. Not every Shakespearean allusion to a character from an Admiral's play can be glossed as a cross-reference. Nor can we presume to recover what is irrecoverably lost. But plausible conjectures buttressed by historical evidence are preferable to winking at the problem. Confronting the lost plays will sharpen our sense of the limitations of a purely textual approach to Renaissance Drama, a field for which roughly 70–80 percent of the plays were never printed. We cannot hear all the chimes and reverberations that Elizabethan audiences did. But the harmonies and counterpoints are there. Like Lorenzo contemplating the imperceptible cosmic symphony, we can at least know that we do not know.

Notes

Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 123.

1. Judging from Philip Henslowe's so-called *Diary*, the Admiral's Men unveiled new plays at a staggering rate: nearly seventeen a year according to Bernard Beckerman in *Shakespeare at the Globe 1599–1609* (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1962), 12. There is every reason to believe, Knutson argues, that the Chamberlain's Men, goaded by the same economic laws of supply and demand, labored at a similarly frenetic pace. The quick turnaround between rehearsal and performance meant that plays by one theatrical company could still be in the repertorial mix when a spin-off premiered in the repertoire of their rivals. Roslyn Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

2. As S. P. Cerasano has shown, early modern audiences did not go simply to hear a play by Kyd or Shakespeare, but to see Edward Alleyn or Richard Burbage. S. P. Cerasano, "Edward Alleyn, the New Model Actor, and the Rise of Celebrity in the 1590s," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 17 (2005): 47–58. The foundational works of Repertory Studies include Roslyn Knutson, *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company 1594–1613* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1991); Scott McMillin and Sally Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time*. For some notable article-length studies, see Andrew Gurr,

"Inter-textuality in Henslowe," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988): 394–98; Knutson, "Two Playhouses, Both Alike in Dignity," *Shakespeare Studies* 30 (2002): 111–117; Lucy Munro, "Early Modern Drama and the Repertory Approach," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 42 (2003): 1–33; and Tom Rutter, "Repertory Studies: A Survey," *Shakespeare* 4:3 (2008): 336–50.

3. On Shakespeare's collaborations, see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); MacDonald Jackson, *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as a Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); John Jowett, *Timon of Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jackson's forthcoming book, *Determining the Shakespearean Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), proposes that *Arden of Feversham* be admitted to the ranks. On the Chamberlain's Men, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company 1594–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), and Bart von Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 79–98.

4. Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of His Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

5. James Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 105. Lucy Munro sounds a clarion call to shift from author-centric approaches toward a recognition of "collaborative networks" in "Early Modern Drama and the Repertory Approach," 3–4.

6. The latest estimate, by Martin Wiggins, raises the number of identifiable lost plays in early modern England to 744. *British Drama 1533–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012–). For a pioneering attempt to plug this gap, see *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England*, ed. David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

7. The classic survey on the "War of the Theatres" is Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1952). The most recent monograph is James Bedarnz, *Shakespeare and the Poet's War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). The phrase was picked up by Robert B. Sharpe, who applied it to the competition between the Chamberlain's and Admiral's Men in *The Real War of the Theatres: Shakespeare's Fellows in Rivalry with the Admiral's Men 1594–1603 Repertories, Devices and Types* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1936).

8. Roslyn Knutson, "Toe to Toe Across Maid Lane: Repertorial Competition at the Rose and Globe, 1599–1600," in *Acts of Criticism: Performance Matters in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 21–37.

9. Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare's Opposites: The Admiral's Company 1594–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32–33.

10. On *Merry Wives*, see Andrew Gurr, "Inter-textuality in Windsor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987): 189–200. For more on the ties between Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *Merchant*, see Maurice Charney, "Jessica's Turquoise Ring and Abigail's Poisoned Porridge: Shakespeare and Marlowe as Rivals and Imitators," *Renaissance Drama* 10 (1979): 33–44; M. C. Bradbook, "Shakespeare's Recollections of Marlowe," *Shakespeare's Styles: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Muir*, ed. Philip Edwards, Inga-Stina Ewbank, and G. K. Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 1980), 191–204; Thomas Cartelli, “Shakespeare’s Merchant, Marlowe’s Jew,” *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1988): 255–60; Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights*, 104–12. Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004), 256–87; and Robert Logan, *Shakespeare’s Marlowe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). A more thorough listing can be found in Julie Davis, “Annotated Secondary Bibliography of Works Comparing Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta* with Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*: 1931–1996,” *Bulletins of Bibliography* 56 (1999): 53–59.

11. Russ McDonald, “The Language of Tragedy,” *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29. Lars Engle imagines how Shakespeare was influenced by the split-level architecture of the Rose, enabling Barabas and Abigail to deliver their soliloquies in alternating lines, in “Watching Shakespeare Learn from Marlowe,” *Thunder at a Playhouse: Essaying Shakespeare on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. Peter Kanelos and Matt Kozuko (Selingsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), 37–49.

12. *Henslowe’s Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 25–28, 30–31, 34, 36, 54. Hereafter cited in text. My remarks here have been anticipated by Tom Rutter, “Merchants of Venice in *Knack to Know an Honest Man*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 19 (2006): 194–209.

13. Current scholarly consensus dates the *Merchant of Venice* to 1596–1597. The terminus a quo for the play’s composition is 1598, as it was entered in the Stationer’s Register in July of that year and Francis Meres includes it in his 1598 inventory of Shakespeare’s oeuvre. Salerio’s reference to a ship called the Andrew (1.1.27) is thought to allude to a ship of the same name captured at Cadiz in 1596, and Shylock’s interpretation of Laban’s sheep-breeding as a defense of usury echoes arguments from a 1595 anti-usury bromide. Considering that Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta* was revived at the Rose in January 1596 (the same month the *Pythagoras* play premiered), late 1596 to early 1597 seems a reasonable estimate for the date of *Merchant of Venice*.

14. Marlowe seems to have cobbled together the plot of *Jew of Malta* from various stories about Jewish financiers who rose to positions of power in Mediterranean politics. See *The Jew of Malta*, ed. N.W. Bawcutt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 4–16; and *Christopher Marlowe: The Plays and their Sources*, ed. Vivien Thomas and William Tydeman (New York: Routledge, 1994), 295–337.

15. Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare’s Sources*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1957), 1:47.

16. Gosson refers in passing to a play “showne at the Bull . . . representing the greedinesse of worldly chusers, and the bloody mindes of Usurers.” The play is mentioned as a possible source for the *Merchant* in Muir, *Shakespeare’s Sources*, 1:47; Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1957), 1:445–46, and in the Third Arden edition of *Merchant of Venice*, ed. John Drakakis (London: Methuen, 2010), 31. All three accounts are skeptical, however, as E. A. J. Honigmann demonstrated that attempts to decode Gosson’s phrases as allusions to the casket-plot and pound-of-flesh plot are strained. “Shakespeare’s Lost Source Plays,” *Modern Language Review* 49:3 (1954): 293–7, esp. 297–98.

17. F. G. Fleay, *Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, 1559–1642*. 2 vols. London: 1891. W. W. Greg, *Henslowe’s Diary*, 2 vols. London: 1904–8. Fleay inter-

preted the *Venetian Comedy* as an alternative title for another lost play, Thomas Dekker's *Jew of Venice*. The suggestion is not absurd but there is, unfortunately, not one shred of evidence to support the identification. Since Dekker does not figure in Henslowe's accounts until 1598 it is perhaps more likely that in this instance Dekker's play emulated Shakespeare's.

18. Robert Boies Sharpe, *The Real War of the Theatre*. In a review of Sharpe's book, Oscar James Campbell characterized it as full of "island voyages to the realm of guess and conjecture" and concludes that a "warning should be sounded against the continued use of the author's method in this field." *Modern Language Notes* 52:1 (1937): 59–61. Sharpe, however, does conjecture that the Pythagoras play "seems to have had a considerable influence on the thought of the times through a discussion of the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis" (89). The evidence accumulated in this article warrants that statement.

19. On the genesis and modus operandi of the *LPD*, see the article by David McInnis and Roslyn Knutson, "The Lost Plays Database: A Wiki for Lost Plays," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 24 (2011): 46–57. The *LPD* does include a section entitled "For What It's Worth," in which contributors are permitted to make brief and modest conjectures. This project marks a huge leap forward for the study of missing repertory. Due to its nature as a reference work reflecting established scholarly consensus, however, the *LPD* is not the ideal venue for more speculative arguments requiring elaborate contextualization.

20. E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (Yale: New Haven 1985); James R. Andreas, "Re-mythologizing *The Knight's Tale: A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the *Two Noble Kinsmen*," *Shakespeare Yearbook* 2 (1991): 49–68; Helen Barr, "'Wrinkled Deep in Time': Emily and Arcite in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Survey* 65 (2013): 12–25.

21. Barbara H. Traister, "Dealing with Dramatic Anonymity: The Case of *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*," *Anonymity in Early Modern England: What's in a Name?*, ed. Janet Wright Starnes and Barbara H. Traister (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 99–112.

22. David McInnis and Matthew Steggle, eds., *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and Matthew Steggle, *Digital Humanities and the Lost Drama of Early Modern England: Ten Case Studies* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2015).

23. Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1972). Also see Charles Kahn, *Pythagoras and Pythagoreans* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2001).

24. S. K. Heninger, *Touchees of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*. (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1974). Christopher Celenza, "Pythagoras in the Renaissance: The Case of Marsilio Ficino," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 667–711.

25. The *Bibliotheca Eliotae*, an important reference work sometimes labeled "Shakespeare's Dictionary," was published in 1548, 1552, and 1559. Cooper expanded on it so thoroughly that he eventually reissued the book under his own name in 1565 and 1584 as *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae*. The citation is from the 1565 edition.

26. Qtd. in *The Presocratics*, ed. Philip Wheelwright (New York: Odyssey, 1966), 228.

27. *A brefe and pleasaunte worke, and science of the phelosopher Pictagoras* (London: 1560?). While the title page boasts that this system of divination is “taken and gethered out of ye sayde Pictagoras worke,” this is patently false, as none of the philosopher’s writings survive. Nevertheless, this text would have buttressed Pythagoras’s reputation as a magician.

28. Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. Daniel Seltzer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 9.29.

29. Albeit the world think Machevill is dead,
 Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps,
 And now the Guise is dead, is come from France
 To view this land, and frolic, with his friends.

The Jew of Malta, ed. James R. Siemon (London: Methuen, 2009). Prologue.1–4. Given their desire to cater to the Rose audience’s appetite for more Marlowe, it is no wonder the Admiral’s Men would find a play about Pythagoras appealing.

30. Citations from Baldwin’s 1555 book—*A Treatise of Moral Philosophy: The Sayings of the Wise*—are taken from the 1908 reprint. D. T. Starnes established that many of Baldwin’s attributions have no textual basis, and are essentially Baldwin’s inventions or embellishments. See “Sir Thomas Elyot and the Sayings of the Philosophers,” *Texas University Studies in English* 13 (1933): 5–35; Curt Buhler, “A Survival from the Middle Ages: William Baldwin’s Use of Dictes and Sayings,” *Speculum* 23:1 (1948): 76–80; R. W. Maslen, “William Baldwin and the Tudor Imagination,” *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature 1485–1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

31. *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy*, ed. Kenneth Guthrie (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes, 1987), 70. The phrase is sometimes attributed to Petronius, or to John of Salisbury’s paraphrase of Petronius. But since the *Satyricon* satirizes the Pythagoreans, it is possible that his *Totus mundus . . . exerceat histrionem* took a cue from the Pythagorean parable. As Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* attests, Augustan Rome experienced a resurgence of interest in Pythagorean philosophy. Alternatively, Richard Edwards may have been the first person to give the Pythagorean adage a meta-theatrical twist.

32. *The Works of Richard Edwards*, ed. Ros King (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001), 7.71–74. For more on Edward’s play, see Robert Stretter, “Cicero on Stage: Damon and Pithias and the Fate of Classical Friendship in English Renaissance Drama,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 47:4 (Winter 2005): 345–65.

33. Montaigne, “Of husbanding your will,” *Complete Essays*, trans. Donald Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), 773.

34. Tiffany Stern, “Was *Totus Mundus Agit Histrionem* Ever the Motto of the Globe?” *Theatre Notebook* 51 (1997): 122–27.

35. While Chettle’s *Damon and Pythias* is now lost, the light that Henslowe’s *Diary* throws on the operations of the Admiral’s Men points to the possibility that it was a kind of spinoff occasioned by the *Pythagoras* play.

36. Iamblichus reports that the Pythagorean community began each day with silent meditation and solitary walks (Guthrie 73–74).

37. *Merchant of Venice*, ed. John Drakakis, 180n.

38. Pythagoras's claim that the immortal soul could transmigrate into the body of non-human animals was widely regarded as heretical or outright absurd. However, his admirers managed to sidestep this problem by reinterpreting metempsychosis in a figurative sense. The same William Baldwin who compiled *The Sayings of the Wise* also authored what is arguably the greatest piece of Tudor prose fiction: *Beware the Cat*. The book brims with anti-Catholic satire, reflecting Baldwin's devout Protestantism during the reign of Edward. However, the book also draws on Baldwin's interest in Pythagoras to defend the existence of language and subjectivity in animals:

There is no kind of sensible creatures but have reason and understanding; whereby, in their kind, each understandeth other and do therein some points so excel that the consideration thereof moved Pythagoras (as you know) to believe and affirm that after death men's souls went into beasts and beasts' souls into men. . . . And although his opinion be fond and false, yet that which drew him thereto is evident and true—and that is the wit and reason of diverse beasts.

Beware the Cat, ed. William Ringler and Michael Flachman (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1988), 32. Conversely, metempsychosis could also be interpreted as a metaphorical insinuation of the inner animality of humans. Such a reading is set forth in an unpublished Tudor manuscript at the British Library (SL 1592), in which the author avers that Pythagoras spoke "by reason of a symylltud." In his preface to the *Metamorphoses*, the Puritan Arthur Golding likewise offers a symbolic defense of transmigration. Drawing on Aristotle's theory of the tri-partite soul (the nutritive, the sensitive, and the rational), Golding accepts that first two can transmigrate but not the third. Golding also sanitizes the doctrine by hinting that Pythagoras conflated "spirit" with air:

I graunt that when our breath dooth from our bodies go away,
It doth efstoones returne to ayre: and of that ayre there may
Both bird and beast participate, and wee of theirs likewise.
Both they and wee draw all one breath

(Epistle. 45–48)

39. Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, and Early Modern Venice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 156. Joseph Leon Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (Columbia: Columbia University Press 1944), 41–64. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

40. Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer et al. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1948), 226–252. Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989), 187, 198.

41. Ben Jonson, *Four Plays*, ed. Helen Ostovich (London: Longman, 1997), 4.5.22. Broughton, as James Shapiro has documented, actually sought to convert the Jews, and his work thus provides a revealing context for the denouement of Shakespeare's *Merchant. Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 147–50. For more on intersections between Judaism and early modern Puritans, see Robert Wilkinson, *The Kabbalistic Scholars of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), and G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

42. Julia Briggs, *This Stage-Play World: Texts and Contexts 1580–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 123.

43. *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice*, ed. H. H. Furness (J. B. Lippincot, 1888), 249–50.

44. Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 1979), 154. Daniel Banes, *The Provocative Merchant of Venice* (Silver Springs, MD: Malcolm House, 1975). Banes would elaborate on these ideas in *Shakespeare, Shylock, and Kabbalah* (Silver Springs, UK: Malcolm House, 1978). Brett D. Hirsch raises questions about the viability of this thesis. See “‘In the Likeness of a Jew’: Kabbalah and *The Merchant of Venice*,” *Ben Jonson Journal* 12 (2005): 119–41. Hirsch cautions there is simply “no proof of Shakespeare’s access to or interest in these sources” (139). In contrast, Shakespeare did have access to and interest in the plays of the Admiral’s Men.

45. Lawrence Danson, *The Harmonies of the Merchant of Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 187.

46. Ranulphi Higden, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, ed. J.R. Lumby (London: Longman and Co, 1865–86), 6:189–209. John Trevisa’s English translation was published by Caxton in 1482, by Wynken de Worde in 1495, and a third edition appeared in 1528. On Higden’s legacy, see Jane Beal, *John Trevisa and the English Polychronicon* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). Higden also reports Pythagoras engaged in litigation with a former pupil over outstanding debts. When the student Annalius enrolled to study rhetoric with the philosopher he paid half the fee upfront, promising to pay the remaining half after his acquired eloquence had enabled him to win a case at law. Annalius, however, quit the school without paying the second installment. When Pythagoras sued him for the remaining fee, the philosopher claimed that whatever the verdict the fee would come to him. For if Pythagoras won the case, the fee would be awarded to him, but if the pupil won, Annalius would have won a law case and therefore be required to pay the fee by their former contract. Annalius, however, made the opposite argument. If he won the case the money should be his, but if he lost then Pythagoras would have to forfeit his fee because his pupil had failed to win a legal argument (201).

47. John Merbecke, *A Booke of Notes and Common Places* (London: 1581), 754.

48. Qtd. in Theodor Dumitrescu, *The Early Tudor Court and International Music Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 214.

49. Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (London: 1598), 282.

50. Charney, “Jessica’s Turquoise Ring,” 35.

51. For a magisterial survey of this issue, see Joseph Loewenstein, *The Author’s Due: Printing and the Prehistory of Copyright* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). For more focused studies on the issue of playbooks, see Andrew Gurr, “Did Shakespeare Own his Playbooks?” *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008), and Grace Ioppolo, *Dramatists and their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Heywood: Authority, Authorship, and the Playhouse* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

52. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For some stimulating attempts to apply Latourian theory to Shakespeare, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in*

the Time of Shakespeare (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), and Julian Yates and Garret Sullivan's Introduction in *Shakespeare Studies* 39 (2011): 23–31. In the same volume Evelyn Tribble and John Sutton invoke cognitive ecology as “highly compatible with the repertory-based theatrical histories” (98). “Cognitive Ecology as a Framework for Shakespearean Studies,” *Shakespeare Studies* 39 (2011): 94–103.

Review Essay

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