

## **Affective Unresponsiveness in *The Merchant of Venice***

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### I. LISTENING FOR SENSE AND SOUND

Antonio and Shylock are often seen as foils but not often compared on the basis of their affective unresponsiveness. Each of them performs unresponsiveness at a crucial point in the play, Antonio in the opening scene, Shylock at the height of the dramatic action in act four. The two instances are very different in their context and import: in the first Antonio laments his immutable sadness, in the second Shylock ascribes his immutable hatred of Antonio to his fixed “humor.”<sup>1</sup> But they are also similar in that in both the lack of affective response is not well understood and presents an impasse that has to be addressed collectively. Antonio’s friends argue, plead, and rail, but they are powerless to dispel Antonio’s stubborn sadness or change Shylock’s humor, and the attempt to influence another’s emotions has to be abandoned.<sup>2</sup> In the former case the effort dissipates, and Antonio’s sadness is not mentioned again; in the latter it is substituted with coercion as Shylock is forced to give up his (admittedly gruesome) suit and convert to Christianity. Not only are Antonio and Shylock confusingly unresponsive, but the sensitivity and lack thereof of Venetian society at large, and its understanding of what ought to be moving, are on display throughout the play. Why does speech fail? Why do people stop their ears? In *The Merchant of Venice*, as I hope to show, Shakespeare investigates the transmission of affect and its failures as a problem of listening.

Listening in *Merchant* is fraught and not limited to speech but includes other sounds too. Before turning to Antonio and Shylock, it is helpful to look at Bassanio’s choice at the casket

trial as a key moment revealing the variousness of the auditory in the play. Bassanio, having learned that he has won Portia's hand, says:

Madam, you have bereft me of all words.  
 Only my blood speaks to you in my veins;  
 And there is such confusion in my powers  
 As after some oration fairly spoke  
 By a beloved prince, there doth appear  
 Among the buzzing, pleased multitude—  
 Where every something, being blent together,  
 Turns to a wild of nothing save of joy  
 Expressed and not expressed. (3.2.175–83)

Bassanio has already said that he is more moved by “paleness” than by “eloquence” (3.2.106).<sup>3</sup> This speech continues his meditation on the moving powers of oratory.<sup>4</sup> The “oration fairly spoke” stands for Portia's confirmation that she is indeed his, a prospect so unbelievably happy that it has left him “doubtful whether what [he sees] be true” until it is “confirmed, signed, ratified” by her (3.2.147–48). In a reversal of the usual order of persuasiveness, Portia's speech is more convincing than the ocular proof provided by the portrait and scroll in the leaden casket, at which Bassanio has been “gazing in a doubt” (3.2.144).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Bassanio (in keeping with the play's exploration of the interaction between the interpersonal and the legal) has asked for official confirmation of Portia's commitment but receives an even greater assurance in the emotional effect that her speech produces in him. Portia's spoken words are more vivid than images and more compelling than written deeds. Bassanio now seems to be greatly moved by the eloquence that he has earlier undermined, except he still ranks it lower than another kind of

emotional expressiveness with which he wishes to identify himself, that of sound without sense. While his speech begins with an acknowledgment of his inadequacy to reciprocate Portia's ("you have bereft me of all words"), it concludes with the notion that the wordless speaking of his own blood and the buzzing of his internal faculties are after all the fuller expression of joy. The rumbling of the body conveys emotion more truly than practiced rhetoric.

Bassanio's turning from speech to body is not a repetition of the lyrical trope of inexpressibility; the figure for the sound of the body is not the individual in the singular mode of desire but the "pleasèd multitude." The merging of many voices ("every something") into a general buzz removes the excesses of speech ("nothing save of joy") and communicates both the joy that has been put into words and that which cannot be put into words ("expressed and not expressed"), which makes it superior to speech. The joyful buzz itself is both "expressed and not expressed"—the sound made by Bassanio's speaking blood is contained, unheard, within his body. This is a felicitous version of Angelo's distress at his own blood crowding his heart like "foolish throngs" blocking out the air for the person they wish to revive, or the "general subject" offending their king with their "untaught love" (*Measure for Measure*, 2.4.20–29). The purest expression of emotion for Bassanio is the unintelligible harmony of a politically unified community responding to the oration of their prince. This is of course only an aspirational state; Bassanio is not humming but speaking, painting as it were a "speaking picture" in the manner of Sidney to evoke this shared, embodied, wordless sound.<sup>6</sup> Not only is Bassanio's communal buzzing only audible through the mediation of ornate speech, but the same scene also demonstrates that wordless sound is also liable to multiple and competing interpretations. When Portia orders music to accompany Bassanio's choice, fearing that he may choose wrong, she explains that a single melody might be heard mournfully as a "swanlike end," or cheerfully as a

“flourish when true subjects bow / To a new-crowned monarch,” or sweetly, like the summoning of a bridegroom to marriage (3.2.44–53).<sup>7</sup> As John Hollander writes in *The Untuning of the Sky*, Portia’s speech shows that “the same music can play many roles, that the concept emerges from the fact as the result of an intellectual process.”<sup>8</sup> How can the superior sound of the body, which is also a collective sound, be expressed and take effect the way rhetoric does? How can we sense without making sense? What is heard in the casket trial is a negotiation of whether sound or sense is the best form of affective transmission. And if sound is after all the most authentic expression of feeling, can it ever be independent from sense to mediate it?

As Bassanio’s extended simile already shows, both sound and sense have important social dimensions. Cicero has credited rhetoric with the foundation of society through its power to transform people “from wild savages into a kind and gentle folk.”<sup>9</sup> Music too, as the oft cited Orphic myth suggests, has the power to tame wild natures, but its operation is less explainable. Whereas rhetoric depends on sense for persuasion (even when sense is faulty), the effect of wordless music is more mysterious. One explanation for its powerful effect is that it arises from sympathy among likes: “things that are of like natures,” says John Case in *The Praise of Musicke*, “have mutual and easy action and passion between themselves.”<sup>10</sup> For Case the explanation is mechanical and based on the similar motions of music and affection, but the road is short to a figurative resonance uniting the community of Christians, as shown in Bishop Robert Skinner’s representative remark: “Have yee not noted how strings touched in an instrument move one another? And so good Christians strongly touched with devout reverence move all that are about them.”<sup>11</sup> Skinner’s simile captures both spiritual and social aspects of music as Christians move one another simply by being themselves divinely moved—if their

reverence produces a sound, it is not literally heard; the community is rather held together by the implied harmonics of shared faith, a spiritual likeness.

Both music and rhetoric appear as prime movers of the passions in Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*. This popular treatise has provided an important context for understanding the humoral language of passion in *Merchant of Venice* since Gail Kern Paster's influential *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*, to which I return below. But as Steven Mullaney has observed, Wright's work also extends beyond humoral theory to social and spiritual contexts.<sup>12</sup> Important to my argument are the proximity of Wright's discussions of music and rhetoric and the social aspects that his analysis highlights in both. With regard to music, Wright emphasizes its civilizing power, a point that he repeats twice: "The Arcadian signorie considering that in regard of the situation of their countrey, the inhabitants for most part were barbarous, savage, and wild; to molifie more their minds, & to render them more mild, gentle, & humane, judged no means more effectuall than to introduct musicke among them... The Arcadians by musicke (as I sayd above) were transformed and transported from savagenesse to civilitie, from fiercenesse to affabilitie, from crueltie to humanitie."<sup>13</sup> In this case likeness is the effect rather than the cause of music's influence. The power of music to move the passions without need of persuasion is also a power to fashion and control others, perhaps when they cannot be persuaded to obey otherwise. Shylock's objection to Christian music therefore goes beyond his disapproval of its "shallow fopp'ry" (2.5.34) but may demonstrate an awareness of its powers of affective control. Shylock seems more concerned about his daughter than about himself. When he tells Jessica: "Hear you me" (2.5.27) and commands her to shut out the drum and fife, he directs her to prioritize sense over sound, to "hear" the pronounced instruction of the father rather than the disarming power of music. What is at stake is not only festivity versus

sobriety but assimilation versus the separateness that sets apart Jews from their (in this case) Christian surroundings.

Directly after his discussion of music Wright moves on to consider how rhetoric moves the passions. This section of the treatise returns to likeness from a different angle. It emphasizes the classical rhetorical principle that orators must first feel the passion they wish to produce in others: “Cicero expressly teacheth that it is almost impossible for an Orator to stirre vp a Passion in his auditors, except he be first affected with the same passion himself,” says Wright, and “Horace well obserued, that he which will make me weepe must first weepe himselfe.”<sup>14</sup> But whether one’s passion produces like passion in another also depends on preexisting likeness between orator and audience, and the underbelly of rhetoric’s ability to build communities is its possibilities of exclusion from them. As Mullaney writes in his own discussion of Wright and *Merchant of Venice*: “Do we weep when we see others weep? Of course we do—sometimes. We do, unless we live in a time or place where ‘we’ has become a vexed question rather than a social given.”<sup>15</sup> Shylock for all his rhetorical virtuosity does not elicit Christian tears for his pain. As I began to suggest, throughout the play Shylock is on the side of sense rather than sound—his struggle to make himself heard is not least evident in his tendency to rephrase himself in order to secure the understanding of his audience.<sup>16</sup> But the effort is futile, because as a Jew in antisemitic Venice Shylock is dehumanized in a way that denies sense to his speech. As part of this exclusionary move, Venice misconstrues Shylock as himself a poor listener to a sound of a higher order, the wordless music that binds together the Christian community. He therefore finds himself outside the humanist promise of affective exchange (the orator’s ability to transmit emotion to their audience) as well as outside the scope of affective resonance, which is the “tendency to resonate and experience the same affect in response to viewing a display of that

affect by another person.”<sup>17</sup> The realization that he will not be heard, I propose below, in turn leads to Shylock’s retreat into affective unresponsiveness to Christian pleas for mercy when he scandalizes the previously unresponsive Venetians with his own unresponsiveness.

The failure of affective exchange also provides an important context for the extremities the play reaches in the fourth act. Shylock’s intent to carve his way through Antonio’s flesh to the point “nearest his heart” (4.1.252) conveys a literal desire for revenge but may also betray a figurative desire to touch Antonio’s heart and move Christian feelings.<sup>18</sup> Antonio, who has accused Shylock of having a hard heart—a general trope for ruthlessness but also carrying a special significance in Christian conceptualization of supposed Jewish apostasy—demands that Shylock “presently become a Christian” (4.1.385).<sup>19</sup> Such coercion stands in contrast to the idea of the regeneration of the heart upon conversion, as well as to Portia’s (disguised as Balthazar) description of Christian feeling as natural and unstrained.<sup>20</sup> Both Shylock and Antonio make violent attempts on each other’s hearts, and although each of them has obvious aims within the plot, they also have figurative significance within general structure of affective exchange in the play—Shylock tries to force Antonio to respond to his grief over the loss of his daughter, dismissed by Antonio’s friends, and Antonio tries to overcome Shylock’s hardness of heart by forcing the change that would have been natural had Shylock heard the harmony that binds the Christian community. The violence of these figurative attempts testifies to the insurmountable gap that prevents a successful affective exchange from taking place.

## II. ANTONIO’S SADNESS

The play announces its interest in how people become (or fail to become) emotionally affected from the start, through Antonio’s sadness:

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.  
 It wearies me, you say it wearies you,  
 But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
 What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
 I am to learn;  
 And such a want-wit sadness makes of me  
 That I have much ado to know myself. (1.1.1–7)

The question that sets the play in motion is how people catch feelings, so to speak: what emotion is and what are its sources, how it travels and permeates minds and bodies. Antonio's doubt also echoes the song performed at Bassanio's casket trial: "Tell me where is fancy bred: / Or in the heart or in the head; / How begot, how nourishèd?" (3.2.63–65).<sup>21</sup> If fancy means in this case love (rather than imagination), then both instances ask how a feeling is originated. The choice of vocabulary also implies that answers to such questions are informed by social context. For an enterprising merchant like Antonio, even a mastering sadness that drains his energy and tests the patience of his friends can be imagined as an object that he has found or come by, so that he retains a sense of agency, however minor, even as he is in its grip. Although the speech conveys resignation or even defeat in the face of emotional fact, it is not static. A counter aspiration for mastery, for gaining a perspective from which sadness can be observed and confronted, is present throughout this short passage—sadness is only named at the end of a progression of *its* that gradually distances it from Antonio's person. In the first line sadness is employed adjectivally, as a central trait ("I am so sad"). But in the second line ("It wearies me, you say it wearies you"), the pronoun "it" holds its antecedent more lightly—the implied referent could be Antonio's sad state, his preoccupation with its sources, his wearisome behavior under its

influence, or likely, a combination of all. It could also be peering ahead over the next few lines at the noun, sadness itself. The following lines increasingly reify sadness without naming it; the “it” in “caught it, found it, or came by it” cannot be the same loose “it” of the previous line.

Grammatically, these three *its* cannot be substituted by the clause “that I am so sad” but must name a noun. When we reach “What stuff ’tis made of, whereof it is born,” sadness has been fully extracted from Antonio’s person. But as soon as Antonio gains footing in the position of observer and names the object he has “found”—sadness itself—the dynamic is turned around and sadness becomes the subject role: it makes Antonio into a “want-wit.” “Caught” can similarly be read to cast Antonio in the role of a hunter (as Hamlet seeks to “catch the conscience of the King” [2.2.524]) while simultaneously suggesting that affection has infected him like a disease. As a businessman for whom gain always entails hazard, Antonio’s speech combines enterprise and surrender, pursuit and resignation in his relation to sadness. It also invites careful listening to its shifting sense of where emotion is located and how it exerts its influence, even when his audience is weary.

The inexplicability of Antonio’s sadness contributes to its inescapability, that is to its unresponsiveness to consolation. Antonio is unaffected by his friends’ attempts to alleviate his sadness and rejects any explanation they offer for it, including anxiety about his merchandise at sea, a secret love, or a social pose. There is evidence that an emotional change *has* taken place in the past. Gratiano’s comment that his friend is “marvelously changed” (1.1.76) invites us to imagine a former, happier version of Antonio. But the allusion to an unseen period before the beginning of the play also underscores the self-containment of dramatic character, the ability of the theater to conjure from a slice of time the illusion of a personality dominated by a single unchanging affect. Antonio’s metatheatrical response that the world is “a stage where every man

must play a part / And mine a sad one” (1.1.78–79) accordingly casts himself as a type limited to a single emotional presentation, as if he were lacking the psychological fullness of other characters that populated the Elizabethan stage, while also speaking to the capacity of fictional character to examine psychological fixity by unfolding a static mental state throughout the play.<sup>22</sup> Gratiano’s retort, “Let me play the Fool” (1.1.79), is an agile attempt to turn the trope on its head; he takes on the role of a stock character to show the versatility of persons in the theater, where one body can leap in and out of characters and many moods and perspectives, a position committed to the capacity for change and suitable for his goal of alleviating his friend’s sadness. This short exchange encapsulates the play’s strategy in a nutshell—the theater allows both extremes of fixity and flexibility, which *Merchant* employs to examine how affective influence works and why it fails.

Antonio’s sadness is something of a mystery in the play, not least because it drops out of the plot after the first scene.<sup>23</sup> But one function that this early episode can be said to have within the plot is to serve as a foil to Shylock’s affective progress. The contrast drawn between the Venetians’ response to Antonio’s and Shylock’s fixed feelings shines a light on the role of the community in making sense of emotions through listening, interpretation, redescription, and friendly counsel, all parts of rhetorical exchange.<sup>24</sup> In act 4 the Duke calls Shylock a “stony adversary” (4.1.4) and Antonio discourages Bassanio from seeking “to soften that than which what’s harder— / His Jewish heart” (4.1.79–80), an association of Jewishness and hard-heartedness that (as I say above) is rooted in Christian antisemitism. But in the play’s first scene Antonio is also likened to a stone. Gratiano advises Antonio not to cultivate his strange sadness: “Why should a man whose blood is warm within / Sit like his grandsire cast in alabaster” (1.1.83–84). Gratiano warns Antonio not to let his face “cream and mantle like a standing pond”

in a melancholy pose that resembles a stone figure (1.1.89). The malleability of the stone image also emerges in Salerio's attempt at encouragement, when he tells Antonio that had he been in his shoes with all his fortunes at sea, even seeing the "holy edifice of stone" of a church would make him imagine the "dangerous rocks" that could wreck his vessel and drown his assets (1.1.30–31). Antonio's affective unresponsiveness provides a blank slate that allows his friends' interpretations to multiply by analogy. But the analogy fails in the case of Shylock, whose stoniness can only be likened and analogized to the stony hearts of Jews since the coming of Christ. I do not want to make more of this similarity than one ought, especially given the stark differences between Antonio's aimlessness and Shylock's lethal aim, but what it does highlight is the potential of affective language to be either creatively malleable or reduced to limited interpretation, depending on the listener. In this light, the opening scene of the play can be seen to dramatize the centrality of the community in making sense of emotions. When the community of friends joins efforts to interpret Antonio's statue-like behavior, they employ rhetorical skill in order to understand and alleviate his sadness. When the same community encounters Shylock at court, the trope of the stony heart serves rather to preempt such interpretive possibilities.

Although Antonio is obviously protected from the kind of social exclusion that Shylock suffers, his unresponsiveness to collective interpretation also sets him apart. This is felt in Solanio's playful dismissal: "Then let us say you are sad / Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy / For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry / Because you are not sad" (1.1.47–50). What Solanio is saying is that emotions only make sense in context, when they are linked to communicable reasons. If sadness cannot relate to reality, then it is merely nominal sadness. The chiasmus reflects the self-containment and isolation of feeling when the words to describe affect have drifted away from the world and can only be defined in relation (in this case, opposition) to

other words; this is the kind of solipsism that resists rhetorical and affective exchange. The importance of sharing emotional burdens is the common knowledge later exploited in Shylock's complaint that after his daughter has eloped with Lorenzo, there is "no ill luck stirring but what lights o'my shoulders, no sighs but o'my breathing, no tears but o'my shedding" (3.1.78–80). The grim joke is that Shylock is not asking to divide his pain but to multiply it through revenge. But the words also gesture at the true sense of isolation resulting from Shylock's inability to affect members of the Venetian society emotionally; they remain unresponsive to his plight.

### III. FAILURES OF LISTENING

In the fourth act, Shylock comes to court to exact the penalty for Antonio's default on his recent loan and extract a pound of Antonio's flesh according to their agreement. As gruesome as Shylock's suit may be, by this stage in the play his reasons for seeking revenge against Antonio should be apparent. Antonio and his friends have humiliated Shylock repeatedly and helped his daughter Jessica abscond with her Christian lover Lorenzo, taking with her a considerable part of Shylock's fortune. Yet when invited to speak, he surprisingly passes over the opportunity to recount these injuries:

You'll ask me why I rather choose to have  
 A weight of carrion flesh than to receive  
 Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that,  
 But say it is my humor. Is it answered? (4.1.40–43)

Shylock's non-answer provides no further reason for preferring the pound of flesh to the payment of the principal (now offered by Antonio's friend and beneficiary Bassanio) than that it is his "humor." The term is rooted in Galenic medicine and regularly glossed as *whim* or *caprice*,

but it can also mean the opposite of momentary impulse, “a fixed and mastering factor in character.”<sup>25</sup> This latter interpretation seems correct, because Shylock continues to elaborate on the immutability of humor for the rest of his speech, describing it as a somatic, involuntary, unalterable, and unexplainable inclination:

Some men there are love not a gaping pig;  
 Some that are mad if they behold a cat;  
 And others, when the bagpipe sings i'th' nose,  
 Cannot contain their urine; for affection,  
 Masters of passion, sways it to the mood  
 Of what it likes or loathes.<sup>26</sup> Now for your answer:  
 As there is no firm reason to be rendered  
 Why he cannot abide a gaping pig,  
 Why he a harmless necessary cat,  
 Why he a woolen bagpipe, but of force  
 Must yield to such inevitable shame  
 As to offend, himself being offended;  
 So can I give no reason, nor I will not,  
 More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing  
 I bear Antonio, that I follow thus  
 A losing suit against him. Are you answered? (4.1.47–62)

Shylock's refusal to explain his hatred of Antonio when the reasons for it have been so visible throughout the play is strange.<sup>27</sup> I suggest that his reliance on somatic and compulsive explanations results from his disillusionment with rhetorical communication. Shylock's inability

to be heard throughout the play and especially in his famous speech in act 3 has shown him the vacuity of the widely accepted rhetorical principle that orators can elicit a passion from their audience by expressing it themselves. The power of rhetoric to move the passions turns out to be based on the tacit assumption that orator and audience share similar emotion concepts, vocabularies, scripts, and tenors. But as a Jew Shylock finds that his grief and anger do not produce sympathy in his Christian audience. Gail Kern Paster has powerfully argued that Shylock “reduces his animosity—animosity grounded complexly in personal history, wounded self-interest, and religious hatred—to an intense and by definition involuntary humoral incompatibility.”<sup>28</sup> I agree with Paster that Shylock desires to shelter in the inevitability of the body. But whereas Paster argues that Shylock takes part in an elite discourse of natural knowledge in order to subvert it, I read his speech as an implicit critique of the principles underlying rhetorical practice.<sup>29</sup> Shylock’s ironic appeal to humoralism revises his earlier understanding of the body as the ground for both sympathy and rhetorical exchange in his “Hath not a Jew eyes?” speech of act 3. When read in the context of this earlier invocation of embodiment, Shylock’s retreat into the body in act 4 obliquely calls to mind what his Venetian audience refuses to hear, the grief over the loss of his daughter that exacerbates his hatred of Antonio. When Shylock says that he can “give no reason,” what is actually impossible is not identifying the reason but giving it—making it heard. Shylock’s ironic speech is rhetorically impressive, but its goal is not persuasive. It is rather a performance of his resignation to a position where his speech is sure to fail when his auditors are unwilling—as they are not with Antonio—to make sense of his emotions.

The intentionality with which Shylock withholds his most tender emotions about Jessica’s betrayal is most evident in moments where his passion nevertheless erupts to the

surface. The first instance occurs when Shylock asserts that the pound of flesh he demands from Antonio is “dearly bought” (4.1.100). The pound of flesh has not been literally bought; it is guaranteed to Shylock as a penalty for Antonio’s default. While Shylock may refer to the loss of his loan, the loss of Jessica presents itself as another likely candidate. Much more explicitly, the second instance of emotional outburst follows Bassanio’s and Gratiano’s declarations of their loyalty to Antonio, even above the fidelity they owe to their wives. Shylock exclaims in response: “These be the Christian husbands! I have a daughter— / Would any of the stock of Barabbas / Had been her husband rather than a Christian!” (4.1.293–95). The exclamation shows Shylock’s care for Jessica and also demonstrates why his grief would be dismissed by Antonio’s friends, for whom her conversion a happy event. Even Portia, a daughter who has remained faithful to the will of her deceased father when it might have limited her chances of marital happiness, is not moved to empathy for the betrayed father. Since Shylock’s emotions about his daughter cannot form the basis for persuasion, they remain largely unexpressed except for short interjections.

Shylock’s acquired mistrust in the possibility of explaining his emotions and inspiring sympathy goes to the very foundations of rhetoric, its dependence on likeness, which is after all the condition rather than the result of rhetorical exchange. His retreat from persuasive speech to the determinism of the body is different from Bassanio’s withdrawal into a responsive body abuzz with the wordless harmony of the community. It is rather a resignation to the exclusion from the community of speakers whose extreme manifestation is being a body without speech. His performance of affective unresponsiveness is meant to bury emotion in the flesh, where speech cannot reach it. Speech and sense depend on the communication of reasons, but Shylock divorces emotions from reasons, instead redescribing them (in a Stoic fashion) as mere

physiological causes. Whereas a causal account might explain how the changing humoral balance of the body leads to the phobias he lists, a reason would provide the personal history, or purpose, or inward logic that brings forth the same reactions. Causes remain at the level of objective, impersonal, and mechanical explanation, whereas reasons open up the realm of the subjective and the personal. By relying on the mechanical causation of the body while withholding his subjective experience, Shylock divides emotions from personal motivation. Persuasion can only be successful where subjective experience is made legible; Shylock, so to speak, removes his emotions from the plane on which rhetorical persuasion operates and instead treats them as a physiological fact. Bassanio's response to the speech: "This is no answer, thou unfeeling man, / To excuse the current of thy cruelty!" (4.1.63–64) encapsulates the very insensibility that Shylock anticipates in his audience. Bassanio recognizes that the physiological fact still needs to be translated from the mechanical to the motivational. At the same time, the ambiguity of the adjective "unfeeling" is telling regarding his perception of Shylock's negative affect. *Unfeeling* can mean "having no feeling or sensation," but it can also mean having the wrong kind of feeling.<sup>30</sup> What Bassanio shows is that Shylock's hatred of Antonio effectively removes his feelings from the possibility of consideration: feeling hostility means no feeling at all, a feeling that can be ignored. The multivalence of the term encapsulates the conflation of Shylock's anger with an emotional lacuna, demonstrating his exclusion from the rhetorical exchange in which emotions are seriously engaged.

As I have noted, the events of the previous act are important for explaining why Shylock resorts to affective unresponsiveness. In act 3, Solanio and Salerio tease Shylock about the loss of his daughter:<sup>31</sup>

SHYLOCK    My own flesh and blood to rebel!

SOLANIO Out upon it, old carrion! Rebels it at these years?

SHYLOCK I say my daughter is my flesh and blood. (3.1.29–31)

Literalism is often associated with Shylock's character, but here it is Solanio who is being overly literal in order to make a crude joke and deflate the emotional import of Shylock's exclamation. Although the figurative use of "flesh and blood" for kin is commonplace, Solanio deliberately misinterprets the phrase, whereas Shylock clarifies his intention in earnest. It also appears that for Shylock the loss of his daughter is connected to the loss of the Antonio's loan. When the conversation turns to Antonio, Shylock says: "There I have another bad match" (3.1.36). Both his paternal investment in Jessica and his loan have proven unsuccessful, and the accumulation of disappointments, all connected to the hostile Christian community, leads to Shylock's memorable rhetorical performance:

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? (3.1.45–55)

In the fourth act Shylock relies on bodily humor to avoid emotional disclosure, but here he treats embodiment as the condition that makes affective experience most communicable.<sup>32</sup> Like Bassanio, Shylock identifies the body as a potential site for feeling sympathy with others and realizing one's place in a community; but while Bassanio ultimately bases sympathy on an

unheard sonic harmony, Shylock finds it in the felt nature of the senses. Universally shared, the vulnerable condition of embodiment provides the precondition for sympathy. The affections and passions, which come into a hierarchical relation in act 4 (where passion is subordinated to affection), here appear paratactically alongside “hands, organs, dimensions, senses” to convey the bio-affective identity between Jews and Christians. Affective experience in this speech is not simply subordinated to the body but continuous with sensory experience. Significantly, the transition from involuntary to voluntary reaction marked by the change from *do* to *shall* (“do we not bleed,” “do we not laugh,” “do we not die,” “shall we not revenge?”) acknowledges the agency that Shylock later denies in act 4. Revenge, in contrast to its representation in the trial scene, is not an automatic reaction like bleeding, laughter, or even death, but rather a voluntary response expressive of reasons for action. At the same time, when it is placed along a chain of physiological reactions and delivered using the rhetorical device of repetition, lulling the ear, revenge is also made to appear like the natural response to being wronged.

Considering the universally shared condition of embodiment (of which Antonio should be especially aware considering the nature of his bond) Antonio’s reason for mistreating Shylock —“what’s his reason? I am a Jew”—seems insufficient. In the third act as in the fourth, the question “what reason” has no satisfactory answer. But whereas in the trial scene Shylock brings up the question of reasons only to express the futility of trying to reason with Christians, in act 3 his speech does strive to communicate the same universality of emotion that he later comes to reject.<sup>33</sup> Importantly, although Shylock’s rhetorical questions and repeated emphasis on the identity between Jewish and Christian bodies suggest that the very fact of embodiment makes his argument self-evident, Shylock does invest it with vast rhetorical force. He is aware that the senses have to be made sense of when they cross cultural boundaries, that the body has to be

translated into words. This is precisely the promise of humanism on which Shylock relies—that using the right words in the right way will make one’s embodied emotions communicable to others. But Shylock’s emotional expressiveness and rhetorical force fail to leave a mark on Solanio and Salerio. They never respond to it. It is as though they never listened. Instead, noting the arrival of Tubal, Solanio remarks: “Here comes another of the tribe; a third cannot be matched unless the devil himself turn Jew” (3.1.64–65). Reinforcing the alleged difference and depravity of Shylock’s “tribe,” the dehumanizing remark reinforces the social boundaries that allow Christians to dismiss Jewish feelings. In the trial scene in act 4 Shylock already knows that rhetoric achieves nothing if the audience refuses to listen. Although he is an accomplished orator, he is powerless to produce sympathy for his grief and humiliation in his audience. His grief has been mocked, his anger has been dismissed. His emotional withholding at this late stage of the play both shows his helplessness in the face of exclusion and exposes the vacuity of rhetoric in cross-cultural exchange.

#### IV. LORENZO’S MUSIC AND PORTIA’S NIGHTINGALE

I have said that *The Merchant of Venice* explores the grounds of affective responsiveness through two types of listening: listening for sense, which is the realm of rhetoric, and listening for the inaudible imagined harmony that binds together the Christian community. This negotiation continues in the fifth act. Belmont, which has also been the setting for Bassanio’s consideration of oratory versus the harmonious body, is where some of the play’s larger themes appear in crystallized form.<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo’s encomium to music articulates what was only latent in Bassanio’s earlier speech, that the most significant influence on a person’s affections is their resonance with an inaudible yet undeniable sound:

—How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.  
 Here will we sit and let the sounds of music  
 Creep in our ears. Soft stillness and the night  
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
 Sit, Jessica. 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 choring to the young-eyed cherubim.  
 Such harmony is in immortal souls,  
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. (5.1.54–65)

For Lorenzo, music needs none of the active listening and collective interpretation that rhetoric requires; it creeps into the ears of passive listeners and fills them with sweetness. In the case of heavenly music, although unheard, it penetrates just as deeply—deeper in fact because it doesn't need to creep in, it is already there, “in immortal souls.” The exchange that follows is strange. Jessica remarks that she is “never merry” when she hears “sweet music” (5.1.69)—suggesting that she is not well attuned to the music Lorenzo has ordered.<sup>35</sup> We do not know what it is she *does* feel, but “never merry” implies it is something negative, and her reluctance to name the feeling accords with the Christian tendency to dismiss the negative feelings of Jews in the play as no feeling at all. But Lorenzo turns out to be a bad listener as well. He replies with praise, as if

Jessica has said the very opposite of what she actually said: “The reason is, your spirits are attentive” (5.1.70). He continues:

For do but note a wild and wanton herd  
 Or race of youthful and unhandled colts  
 Fetching mad bounds, bellowing, and neighing loud,  
 Which is the hot condition of their blood:  
 If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,  
 Or any air of music touch their ears,  
 You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,  
 Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze  
 By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet  
 Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods,  
 Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage  
 But music for the time doth change his nature.  
 The man that hath no music in himself,  
 Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
 The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
 And his affections dark as Erebus.

Let no such man be trusted! Mark the music. (5.1.71–88)

Lorenzo’s praise of “the sweet power of music” to affect not only humans but also animals, plants, and even stones, gives us a sense of what is at stake for him if he were to truly hear Jessica. The power of music, which also stands for assimilation into the Christian community,

ought to overcome the inhumanity that Christians attribute to Jews. If Jessica does not respond with merriment to sweet music, could she be unfit even to the society of animals, more insensible than a stone, or perhaps closer in disposition to her stony father than Lorenzo has hoped? The possibility that Jessica's birth precludes true conversion has been suggested by Lancelot Gobbo, who said she was "damned both by father and mother" (3.5.13–14). A similar concern about Jessica's innate qualities appears to be present here. Does she share the music found "in immortal souls" or is she like the "man who hath no music in himself"? In Renaissance England music had the potential to bridge social differences since "harmony was the agreement of different sounds or the combination of opposites," but Lorenzo insists on a music that does not combine natures but transforms them; if he imagines harmonic bridges, they link angelic song and human souls rather than the souls of humans of different nations.<sup>36</sup> His condemnation of the "man who hath no music in himself" first sounds conjectural, a general statement as in the Italian proverb found in Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman*: "Whom God loves not, that man loves not Musicke."<sup>37</sup> The possibility of such a person seems merely hypothetical at first, since Lorenzo has already said that "naught" is impervious to the effects of music. But such a person grows gradually more real and near as Lorenzo gives him definite social attributes and makes him the object of warning: "Let no such man be trusted!" He then abruptly redirects Jessica's attention to the music in the imperative: "Mark the music," as if belatedly aware that she may have missed something.

Lorenzo's speech straddles Christian and humanist contexts. His highly allusive language evokes the Ovidian myth of Orpheus, the god of the underworld, and possibly Cicero's praise for rhetoric's ability to lead humanity from brutishness to civilization, all of which suggests the universal context for which he aims.<sup>38</sup> But his earlier praise of music, before Jessica's disturbing

remark, is decidedly Christian, exalting the music of the angels and cherubim that inhabit the celestial spheres and claiming the same harmony for Christian “immortal souls,” even if they cannot hear it in this life. Lorenzo casts the affective resistance of the “man that hath no music in himself” as a deficit (the lack of music) rather than an opposition (discord). It is an incapacity to be affected rather than a distinct, if discordant, affect; it is no feeling rather than bad feeling. For Lorenzo, in other words, the Christian is the universal; and as David Nirenberg has observed, Jessica’s transition into Christianity is also a transition into humanity.<sup>39</sup> In this way, the inaudible music with which Christians harmonize without hearing substitutes the supposedly universal art of rhetoric, unheard melodies are more successfully unifying than speeches, sound more effective and affecting than sense. But this is of course also the very view that justifies stopping one’s ears to “the man who hath no music in himself,” no matter how compelling his speech.

Jessica does not get a chance to reply before Portia and Nerissa’s arrival interrupts the lovers’ conversation. The two women’s brief exchange about the relative merits of different songbirds seems minor compared to the ornate image of universal concord spun by Lorenzo, but by positioning the two conversations side by side Shakespeare seems to imply a kind of dialogue between them. As she hears the music emanating from her house, Portia observes how well the nighttime complements its sounds:

PORTIA       [... ] Music, hark!

NERISSA      It is your music, madam, of the house.

PORTIA       Nothing is good, I see, without respect;  
                  Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

NERISSA      Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

PORTIA       The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark

When neither is attended; and I think  
 The nightingale, if she should sing by day  
 When every goose is cackling, would be thought  
 No better a musician than the wren.  
 How many things by season seasoned are  
 To their right praise and true perfection! (5.1.97–108)

Portia, mistaking the music of her own house for some sweeter tune, is led to acknowledge that the ability to perceive the sweetness of music (and by extension, to evaluate other “things”) depends on circumstances such as attention and relative quiet. In other words, being affected by sound depends not only on the sound itself but also on listening, timing, and environment. There is a jocular tone to Portia’s conflation of melodies—she knows that the crow, the lark, the nightingale, and the goose each produces its own kind of music, and the play may be implying that there could be music other than Christian. But Portia is also aware of how these songs can be stifled. The transition from manmade music to birdsong is also interesting. Micha Lazarus has ingeniously shown that in Renaissance Europe the nightingale symbolized both poetry and melody, human meaning and pure voice, sense and sound.<sup>40</sup> In *The Merchant of Venice*, it seems like evaluating sound may be analogical to evaluating speech. The nightingale song needs the quietude of night to be appreciated (and Lorenzo has also said that “Soft stillness and the night / Become the touches of sweet harmony”), Shylock needs an unprejudiced society to be heard. The analogy between the two is especially tempting considering the traditional topic of the nightingale’s song: in Ovid (also mentioned by Lorenzo), the bird cries out for its lost children.<sup>41</sup> The symbolic sense of the grieving parent whose mourning is overwhelmed by background noise invokes Shylock’s predicament.

Portia's emphasis on the need for favorable conditions in order to appreciate sweet music also has an analogy in the rhetorical topos of accommodating circumstances. To be successful, the orator must take into account all aspects of the situation, including audience and occasion, and choose the best words accordingly. If the speaker fails to accommodate circumstances (and for Shylock the circumstances are too hostile to be overcome) the speech will not be well received. This is the topos expressed in Cicero's account of why we never hear the music of the spheres. Like those who live so close to the Falls of Catadupa that they "lack the sense of hearing because of the loudness of the cataract," our own sense of hearing has been blunted by the mighty sound of the revolving universe.<sup>42</sup> S. K. Heninger and Lawrence Danson both contrast Lorenzo's reverent explanation for the inaudibility of the soul's harmony with this pagan reason for our ignorance of celestial harmony.<sup>43</sup> But Lorenzo's speech is already steeped in pagan imagery, and the Ciceronian emphasis on circumstance re-enters the play through Portia and Nerissa's dialogue. By importing a version of Cicero's explanation for how senses become blunted and applying it to the mourning nightingale, Portia implicitly gives voice to the lesson learned by Shylock about why he cannot be heard.

In *The Merchant of Venice* affective influence coded as sound or sense, music or rhetoric, is always out of Shylock's reach as long as he cannot hear the celestial harmony that is in fact heard by no one. The fiction of such a harmony is meant to preclude Shylock from being heard, which he eventually reciprocates in kind only to realize at the moment of forced conversion that he is more vulnerable to the influence of Christians than he had hoped, whereas they remain untouched by him. The final act in Belmont aims to confirm Shylock's place outside the play's affective resonance, but at the same time it also reveals how the Christians remain unaffected by deliberately refusing to listen.

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William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2016), 4.1.43. All subsequent citations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.

<sup>2</sup> On the narrative operations of strong affective responses to insensibility see Wendy Anne Lee, *Failures of Feeling: Insensibility and the Novel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> "Paleness" may be a mistake for "plainness." See the discussion in John Russell Brown, ed. *The Merchant of Venice* (London: Methuen, 1961), 82; cited in Richard Strier, "Paleness versus Eloquence: The Ideologies of Style in the English Renaissance," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 45.2 (2019) 91–120, 92.

<sup>4</sup> For a useful account of the centrality of rhetoric for moving the passions in the English Renaissance see Lawrence D. Green, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Renaissance Views of the Emotions" in *Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Mack (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 1–25.

<sup>5</sup> The reference to "ocular proof" comes from *Othello*, 3.3.357.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy," in *Sidney's "The Defence of Poesy" and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 10.

<sup>7</sup> While the song that ends up being performed does have words, there is no indication that Portia has asked for a specific kind of music. On this and other issues related to the purpose of the song see Nicholas Bellinson, "Does Portia Cheat? And other questions about the casket trial in *The Merchant of Venice*," an unpublished essay presented at the University of Chicago Renaissance

Workshop on April 27, 2020, 6.

<sup>8</sup> John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500–1700* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1961), 151.

<sup>9</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1949), 6–7, I.ii.3.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2015), 53–54.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (London: Printed by A.M. for Anne Helme, 1620), 159.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 172–73. The principle also appears in Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, trans. Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001), 6.2.26. For its prevalence in Elizabethan education see Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2012), 2, 132.

<sup>15</sup> Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions*, 62. On humanism's paradoxical exclusivity, see also Robert Cockcroft, *Rhetorical Affect in Early Modern Writing: Renaissance Passions Reconsidered* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 20; Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); Mike Pincombe, *Elizabethan Humanism: Literature and Learning in the Later Sixteenth Century* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 197; cited in Smith, 20.

<sup>16</sup> For a prominent example see his explanation of the term “good man” in 1.3.13–15, and his explanation of “flesh and blood” below.

<sup>17</sup> I here follow Matthieu Chapman's use of the term “affective resonance,” taken from Silvan Tomkins, to discuss insensibility to Black suffering in “‘Away, You Ethiop!’ *A Midsummer Night's*

*Dream* and the Denial of Black Affect—A Song to Underscore the Burning of Police Stations,” in *Race and Affect in Early Modern English Literature*, ed. Carol Mejia LaPerle (ACMRS Press, 2022), 178. My intention is to position this term in the context of the auditory in *The Merchant of Venice*.

<sup>18</sup> For another interpretation see Laurie Shannon, “Likening: Rhetorical Husbandries and Portia’s ‘True Conceit’ of Friendship,” *Renaissance Drama* 31 (2002): 3–26, 14. Shannon compares Shylock’s desire to pry open Antonio’s flesh with Antonio’s openness in relation to Bassanio.

<sup>19</sup> See Romans 9. Paul’s letter to the Romans likens the Jews’ adherence to Mosaic law after the coming of Christ to the obstinacy of Pharaoh, a comparison that enables him to conclude that God has ultimately rejected the Jews.

<sup>20</sup> According to James Shapiro, the forced conversion would have also surprised Elizabethan audiences, partly because “coerced conversions were virtually unheard of in the various narratives circulating about Jews in sixteenth-century England.” See *Shakespeare and the Jews*, twentieth anniversary edition (New York: Columbia UP, 2016), 131.

<sup>21</sup> Compare also Glauce’s search for the source of Britomart’s lovesickness: “but what thing it mote bee, / Or whence it sprong, I can not read aright.” Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.16.6–7. The song itself may be meant to affect Bassanio’s choice through sound. For an overview of the relevant criticism see Nicholas Bellinson, “Does Portia Cheat?,” 2–6.

<sup>22</sup> For another reading of this passage suggesting that Antonio is adhering to Stoic values mediated through the trope of *theatrum mundi*, see Rasmus Vangshardt, “Antonio’s Sadness in the Stoic *Theatrum Mundi* of the Early Modern City,” *Orbis Litteratum* 74: 4 (2019), especially 266–67, 274.

<sup>23</sup> Possible explanations include Antonio’s state of alienation in Cynthia Lewis, “Antonio and Alienation in ‘The Merchant of Venice,’” *South Atlantic Review* 48: 4 (1983); his “homosocial sadness” over the impending loss of Bassanio in Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotion*, 36; or a form of Stoic constancy in Vangshardt, “Antonio’s Sadness,” which is a more positive

understanding of unaffectedness than my own. Interesting to me is where critics locate failures of listening in the scene; Lewis suggests: “We suspect that Antonio has barely listened to Salerio’s compelling speech, so little has it affected him” (24), whereas for Vangshardt, “Antonio’s peers are clearly not listening” (266).

<sup>24</sup> On the rhetoric of friendly counsel see Wendy Olmsted, *The Imperfect Friend: Emotion and Rhetoric in Sidney, Milton and their Contexts* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> D. H. Bishop, “Shylock’s Humour,” *Shakespeare Association Bulletin* 23 (1948): 175–76.

<sup>26</sup> “Masters of passion” is awkward, and there is a textual issue here. See M. M. Mahood’s supplementary note in *The Merchant of Venice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018), 183.

<sup>27</sup> Others have noticed the strangeness. Samuel Johnson writes that Shylock does not try to elicit Venetian sympathy because he hopes to exacerbate the offence to his audience; Quentin Skinner argues that Shylock deliberately flouts the rules of rhetoric to assert his legal right; Lorna Hutson observes that his insistence on “firm reason” signals Shylock’s exclusion from an economy of uncertainty; Gail Kern Paster argues that Shylock’s humoralism serves the purpose of self-justification, whereas Richard Strier rejects a literal interpretation of humoralism and argues that the speech demonstrates the opacity of characters’ motives even to themselves. See Johnson, *Notes to Shakespeare*, The Yale Digital Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, 226.

[http://www.yalejohnson.com/frontend/sda\\_viewer?n=108488](http://www.yalejohnson.com/frontend/sda_viewer?n=108488); Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), 142–48; Hutson, *The Usurer’s Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 233–34; Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2004), 203; Strier, *Shakespearean Issues: Agency, Skepticism, and Other Puzzles* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2022), 43–47.

<sup>28</sup> Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 205.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *OED online*, s.v. "unfeeling, adj." 1.a., 2. Accessed June, 2021, <https://www-oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/213271?rskey=i7ddh1&result=3&isAdvanced=false> (accessed June 28, 2021). On the conflation of unfeeling and bad feeling see also Lee, *Failures of Feeling*, 2, 10, 15–19.

<sup>31</sup> For another discussion of Christian misinterpretations of Shylock's values and passions see Sara Coodin, "'This Was a Way to Thrive': Christian and Jewish Eudaimonism in *The Merchant of Venice*," *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, eds. Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2015), 65–85.

<sup>32</sup> For a recent reading that links Shylock's argument for "embodied verisimilitude" to his analogy of slavery in act 4 see Holly Dugan, "Shylock's Senses: Entangled Phenomenologies of Difference on Early English Stages," in *Embodiment, Expertise, and Ethics in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Marlene L. Eberhart and Jacob M. Baum (London: Routledge, 2020), 132–53, especially 132–36.

<sup>33</sup> On the visceral affectivity of Shylock's speech see also John Gross, *Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 67: "[The lines] are wrenched from Shylock; they have the stamp of anger and spontaneity."

<sup>34</sup> As in the relation between giving and hazarding; see Bellinson, "Does Portia Cheat?," 7–8.

<sup>35</sup> On the affective registers of sadness and sweetness, see Antonio Chemotti, "'A Sweet but Grave and Sad Melody': Music and Emotion in Exequies in Post-Tridentine Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 77 (2024).

<sup>36</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, 17.

<sup>37</sup> Marsh, 70.

<sup>38</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero III: De Oratore, Books I–II*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Racham, vol. 1, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1942), 24–25 (I.viii.33). The analogy between Lorenzo's speech and Cicero's text is made in Laurie Shannon, "Likening," 3–26, 21.

<sup>39</sup> David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 2013), 539–40. See also Sara Coodin, “Conversion Interrupted” in *Race and Affect*, 95–96: “Lorenzo forecasts the conversion of the Jews and their submission to universalizing Christianity whose harmonies remain inaudible to Jewish ears so long as Jews remain unredeemed by conversion.” By contrast, others have interpreted the scene as unambiguously happy. See S. K. Heninger, Jr., *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Mythology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 1974), 4–5; Lawrence Danson, *The Harmonies of the Merchant of Venice* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1978), 186, 188–89; M. M. Mahood, introduction to *The Merchant of Venice*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Michal Lazarus, “Birdsongs and Sonnets: Acoustic Imitation in Renaissance Lyric,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 84.4 (2021): 681–715.

<sup>41</sup> Lazarus, “Birdsongs and Sonnets,” 682.

<sup>42</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Dream of Scipio*, in *Ethical Writings of Cicero: De Officiis; De Senectute, De Amicitia, and Scipio’s Dream*, trans. Andrew P. Peabody (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1887), 81.

<sup>43</sup> Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, 5; Danson, *The Harmonies of the Merchant of Venice*, 187.