



## Shylock's inwardness and resentment

### Interioridade e o ressentimento de Shylock

Carlos Roberto Ludwig<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract

This paper focuses on part of the trial scene in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Antonio's inward dispositions are represented in the frivolous act of sacrificing himself for Bassanio. His innermost desire is to hide his sinister inward dimensions, which he does not wish to see. Thus, he praises only his act of generosity paid with his own life, in a somewhat masochistic act. On the other hand, Shylock's resentment and revenge depicts his innermost dimensions, portraying his inwardness in the play.

**Keywords:** Inwardness. Resentment. Merchant of Venice.

#### Resumo

Este artigo analisa parte da cena do julgamento no Mercador de Veneza de Shakespeare. As disposições interiores de Antonio são representadas em um ato frívolo de sacrificar-se por Bassanio. Seu desejo mais profundo é esconder suas sinistras dimensões interiores, que não deseja ver. Assim, elogia apenas seu ato de generosidade pago com a própria vida, num ato algo masoquista. Por outro lado, o ressentimento e a vingança de Shylock retratam dimensões interiores, retratando sua interioridade na peça.

**Palavras-Chave:** Interioridade. Ressentimento. Mercador de Veneza.

---

<sup>1</sup> Doutor em Letras pela UFRGS. Docente do Mestrado em Letras da UFT, Campus de Porto Nacional. Email: carlosletras@uft.edu.br.

## Inwardness in Shakespeare's Age

The Merchant of Venice is a play specially focused on appearances and subtle inner feelings of the characters. It is a play that represents the paradoxes between outwardness and inwardness,<sup>2</sup> which is suggested by the Shakespearean mirroring device, silences, the non-said, bodily gestures, breaks of language and twists of language. But inwardness was a Renaissance issue emerging from previous forms of the representation of an inner-self in other literary forms. However, outwardness was supposed to be false, deceitful, and even dangerous, whereas the notion of the inwardness was seen as true and sincere, even though it was imperceptible to the senses. The forms, moulds and shapes of the appearances could be calculated pretensions, which may not be seen as the symptoms of a truthful inward disposition of the mind. Such paradox was not at all an unfamiliar issue to Shakespeare's coevals. Thus, to overcome this gap certain forms of discourses described and identified discursive traits, which constituted the constellations of the rhetoric of inwardness in that age.

Inwardness is an interior space of the self, which is constituted by feelings, thoughts, and ideas which appear in ever so subtle and sometimes puzzling details of the text. In fact, inwardness is the resulting perceptiveness of an inner space of the individual. The notion of this inward space and inwardness is perceived, on the first and most obvious level, in acts and attitudes; secondly, in poetical constellations which permit to make inferences about the characters' conscience and their ethical decisions; in moments of indecisions and crises; or, more subtly and often overlooked, in the enigmas of bodily gestures, conscience, verbal slips, silences, implicit meaning in words and language, and pathos. They are determined by some *mysterious forces* of the self's unconscious, which cannot be controlled and pop up in bodily feelings and paradoxical ideas (McGINN, 2007). Inwardness is, therefore, the inward dispositions of the self wherein thoughts, feelings, ideas, and anxieties are floating and are incrustated in the individual's unconscious.

Considering inwardness as an epochal cultural construct, its traits and shapes are quite different from the modern concept of subjectivity. Inwardness is still a broader concept in English Renaissance Age, rather than our modern concept of subjectivity, which is inevitably pervaded by philosophical concepts and psychoanalytic assumptions.

---

<sup>2</sup> For the concept of inwardness and subjectivity, see my essays in Ludwig (2018; 2020).

## Suing the Merchant: Shylock's revenge

Shylock's rage and bitterness due to Jessica's elopement is projected on Antonio as a retaliatory act against the Christians. Though Lorenzo ran away with Jessica and took Shylock's money, he uses Antonio as a sort of scapegoat to his revenge. At the end of scene i, act III, Tubal affirms that Antonio is indeed bankrupt. Shylock is quite determined in suing Antonio. He wants to satisfy his revenge at any cost:

**Tubal.** But Antonio is certainly undone.

**Shylock.** Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, fee me an officer; bespeak him a fortnight before. I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will. Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue; go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 289)

He wants to anticipate the date of the bond and he will demand his bond "a fortnight before". In fact, he wants at any cost to revenge himself of Antonio's mistreatment, disrespect and disdain. Shylock desperately wants to do it because nothing more remains: he has lost many things he esteemed, so that he cannot bear the idea of leaving Antonio unpunished. Thus, he reacts not waiting for the deadline of his bond. Moreover, his repetitive comic speech enhances once again his resentment and obsession for revenge. By these repetitions Shakespeare suggests Shylock's inward feelings and intentions. Such comic repetition is a mimetic device to represent his inwardness.

The next time we see Shylock on stage is in act III, scene iii, a scene when Antonio is imprisoned by the jailer. Enraged, Shylock does not want to hear Antonio's complaints and requests: "Jailer, look to him: tell not me of mercy; / This is the fool that lent out money gratis: / Jailer, look to him." (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 316-317). In this moment, Antonio for the second time gives positive description of Shylock: "Hear me yet, good Shylock." (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 317). Antonio tries to dissuade him of his bond and his demand for a lawful decision in court. The merchant could have thought about any solution for his bankruptcy and his debts to Shylock. It is worth noting that Antonio's friends do nothing for him *now*. In fact, they did not do anything for him at the beginning of the play, when he needed to help Bassanio get the loan of three thousand ducats. This scene may remind the reader of *Richard III*, who plays a villain and also becomes enraged and tries to get his revenge. According to Ludwig (2017), Richard III is always playing the

role of both a villain and a hypocritic man who wishes power at any cost.

Then he claims the Jew's mercy who does not want to hear him:

I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond:  
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.  
Thou calledst me dog before thou hadst a cause;  
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:  
The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,  
Thou naughty jailer, that thou art so fond  
To come abroad with him at his request. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 317)

In a loquacious discourse, full of repetitions expressing his anger, Shylock clearly claims that he will have his bond at any cost. Once again, Shylock reminds Antonio's calling him a dog. However, here he cunningly reverses Antonio's insults into a sort of weapon against him. Now the kicked dog can attack Antonio with his fangs. Shylock remarks once again that Antonio had no cause to offend, to be aggressive and strike the Jew. Thus, his discourse makes it evident that he cannot control his anger and resentment. His uncontrolled dimensions overcome him, making both the audience and the reader see in-between his speech that his inward feelings, rage and bitterness are represented in his loquacious discourse. The uncontrolled dimensions were something perceived in the Renaissance not only by Shakespeare, but by Montaigne, who pointed out that our ethical and moral decisions are partly determined by the uncontrolled dimensions of the inner self.

Against the Shylock we saw in act I, scene iii, who wanted to seem kind and generous to Antonio, even though we knew his secret intentions, this Shylock reveals his innermost dark and sinister dimensions. It is quite surprising to see his anger and crying out on the streets. However, Shylock's rage was visible in the previous scene when he claimed that both Jews and Christians are similar in terms of feelings, ideas, intentions and physical constitution.

Though Antonio tries to speak to him and dissuade him of his intention of suing him at court, Shylock is not merciful to Antonio, he insists on not hearing the merchant's claims.

I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak:  
I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more.  
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,  
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield

To Christian intercessors. Follow not;  
I'll have no speaking: I will have my bond. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 317-318)

Shylock's strong-headedness will really be a problem for him in the trial scene, when Portia will use his lack of mercy to outwit his bond. Here and in the above-mentioned speech, Shylock obsessively repeats the sentence "I'll have my bond". He is, in fact, moved by his obsessive desire for revenge against Antonio's mistreatment, Lorenzo's running away with Jessica, as well as his own daughter's theft of his ducats. This obsession for revenge unveils his bitterness and resentment. His seeking for revenge turns out to be fanaticism and even madness.

Shylock recognises in this speech that in some occasions he had been kind. He was used to being submissive and relenting to the merchant's mistreatment and undoing of his business. Against Shylock's rage and desire for revenge, his submission which once made him accept Antonio's aggressions, is an imagistic powerful contrast in this scene. The reversal of the roles - Antonio was once the aggressor and Shylock the victim, and now Shylock is the aggressor whereas Antonio embodies the victim - demonstrates Shakespeare's cunning artistry in building contrasts. Though they seem opposing characters, they have indeed similar sinister and aggressive impulses and feelings. What Shakespeare is suggesting is that their relationship is not a matter of black and white, but it simply reveals that both Antonio and Shylock can play tricks, be victims, aggressors and avengers.

Though Shylock does not hear Antonio, the merchant also acknowledges his undoing of Shylock's business:

**Salerio.** It is the most impenetrable cur  
That ever kept with men.  
**Antonio.** Let him alone:  
I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.  
He seeks my life; his reason well I know:  
I oft delivered from his forfeitures  
Many that have at times made moan to me;  
Therefore he hates me. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 318)

Salerio states that Shylock is an impervious dog among men and that no one can dissuade him of his intentions. Salerio's mentioning "impenetrable cur" alludes to the commonplace of the impossibility of knowing and figuring out one's heart, intentions and

ideas, according to Maus (1995). It is ironic, because though the merchants were supposed to know Shylock's real intentions, Antonio was not able to prevent the embarrassing situation of being bankrupt and sued by Shylock. According to Harry Berger Jr. (2010), the play is about embarrassment and humiliation. All characters embarrass others, especially Portia who embarrasses Shylock, Antonio and Bassanio. Nevertheless, Shylock's bond aims at humiliating Antonio, as well as Antonio's signing of the bond aims at humiliating Bassanio. According to Berger Jr. (2010, p. 3-4),

Instead of being crucified, he is mercified. Mercifixion may be more humane than crucifixion: you mercify rather than punish. Nevertheless, it inflicts its own kind of pain: you punish by mercifying. [...] The pain mercifixion inflicts is the pain of embarrassment. [...] More generally, *The Merchant of Venice* is a comedy of embarrassment, and the sequence of very short sections into which this chapter is divided will explore various aspects of that assertion. To embarrass is to make someone feel awkward or uncomfortable, humiliated or ashamed. Such feelings are triggered not only by specific acts of criticism, blame, and accusation.

Portia embarrasses not only Antonio and Bassanio, but Shylock as well. Portia's rhetorical power makes it possible for her to outwit Shylock's bond and does not lose her money in a thriftless enterprise.

Furthermore, as in act I, scene iii, Antonio recognises once again that Shylock hates him because he had undone his "forfeitures" and helped other merchants to repay their debts. He also acknowledges the lawful impossibility of stopping Shylock's civil suit, in his conversation with Salerio:

**Salerio.** I am sure the duke  
Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.  
**Antonio.** The duke cannot deny the course of law:  
For the commodity that strangers have  
With us in Venice, if it be denied,  
Will much impeach the justice of his state;  
Since that the trade and profit of the city  
Consisteth of all nations. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 318)

Though Salerio believes that the Duke is going to free Antonio from such a bond, Antonio denies such possibility, because it could set a precedent in Venetian laws and many other merchants would be able to claim the right of undoing their bonds. In this speech, Antonio also reveals to the audience that Venice is economically based on foreign commerce. Both foreign and Venetian merchants had the same rights, because Venice

financially depended on their profits and commerce. In fact, Venice was much like the late 16<sup>th</sup> century London. Some reports of Shakespeare's age revealed that the commerce and financial gains in London and Venice was basically provided by foreigners, especially Jews (SHAPIRO, 1996).

After Shylock's leaving the scene, Antonio is very submissive and resigned to his fate. He accepts that he will be sued by Shylock and, as a result, there seem to be no way out. He only prays that Bassanio comes back to see his sacrifice for him:

These griefs and losses have so bated me,  
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh  
To-morrow to my bloody creditor.  
Well, jailer, on. Pray God, Bassanio come  
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not! (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 319)

In fact, Antonio embraces the Christian-like sacrifice for Bassanio. In a more subtle level, he seems to be delighted with the sacrifice Shylock will impinge on him, revealing his frivolous attitude towards Bassanio. In fact, Antonio's sacrifice for Bassanio, enabled by Shylock, satisfies his masochistic desire and fear for pain and pity. He accepts to be sacrificed like a lamb, in fact he will call himself a "tainted-wether" (a weak castrated ram) that is ready to be murdered. This masochistic desire for sacrifice/castration is the effect of the mysterious forces incrustated in his unconscious forces which determine his inward feelings (MCGINN, 2007, p. 12). What is more striking is that the more Shylock will claim for his bond and torture Antonio with his promise, the more Antonio will be resigned. Next scene we see both together again, Antonio will be weaker and complied with his fate, and Shylock will be stronger and more confident that he will have his bond.

### **The trial scene: inwardness and Shylock's resentment**

In the court of justice, the Duke confirms Antonio's submission to Shylock's bond:

**Duke.** I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer  
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch  
Uncapable of pity, void and empty  
From any dram of mercy.  
**Antonio.** I have heard  
Your grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify  
His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate  
And that no lawful means can carry me

Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose  
My patience to his fury, and am armed  
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,  
The very tyranny and rage of his. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 331-332)

The Duke describes Shylock as a heartless being, who does not want to hear their begging and is merciless. The Duke sees Shylock as merely incapable of mercy and pity. Though the Duke, as the representative of Venice's law and justice, tries to defend Antonio from Shylock's suit, he is unable to undo Shylock's bond and dissuade him of his intention. However, Antonio is prepared for Shylock's suit and rage. In fact, after Antonio's words the duke simply silences and demands: "Go one and call the Jew into the court" (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 332).

Moreover, in this speech the merchant also acknowledges that there is no law in Venice which can stop the Jew and break such a bond. Antonio's attitude displays resignation and even submission to Shylock's bond and Venice's law. In fact, in the trial scene, he embodies the trait of a lamb ready to be sacrificed, a sacrifice he is bound to suffer for Bassanio's sake.

When the duke demands Shylock to enter the courtroom, he tries to dissuade Shylock of his bond once again. However, in vain can the Duke convince Shylock:

Make room, and let him stand before our face.  
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,  
That thou but leadest this fashion of thy malice  
To the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought  
Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange  
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty;  
And where thou now exactest the penalty,  
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,  
Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture,  
But, touched with human gentleness and love,  
Forgive a moiety of the principal;  
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,  
That have of late so huddled on his back,  
Enow to press a royal merchant down  
And pluck commiseration of his state  
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,  
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never trained  
To offices of tender courtesy.  
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 333-334)

Now the duke tries to persuade Shylock reminding him of Antonio's former losses and his misery, though his talk is in vain. The Duke hopes that Shylock would be merciful



to Antonio. For him Shylock's suit is quite strange and reveals his mercilessness. However, the duke suggests that if he takes the pound of flesh he will lose his money and the chance of forgiving him. In an attitude similar to selling indulgencies, as the duke states "forgive a moiety of the principal", he implicitly connects money and mercy. In fact, mercy is echoed in words like com-merce, com-commercial. According to Critchley and McCarthy (2004) the word *mercy* "is derived from *merches*, that is, from the same root as merchant, meaning 'payment,' 'recompense,' and 'revenue.' What is revenue in talk of mercy is mercantile revenue. Christianity is the spiritualization of the originally material." (2004, p. 04).

In this speech the Duke opposes, in a long and confusing sentence, the "royal merchant" and "Turks and Tartars". "Royal merchant" does not mean that Antonio is from the aristocracy, but that he deals with assured merchandises. (Drakakis, 2010, p. 333). What is more, in Renaissance and Christian imaginary, Turks were connected to the savagery against the Christians, just as they were thought to be in league with Jews (DRAKAKIS, 2010, p. 334). In one of the play's sources, in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, such allusion is clearer. Barabbas takes a Turk and a Moor as his slaves, and later gives Malta to the Turk Calymath. Contrary to Marlowe and his coevals, Shakespeare constructs the play in a complex web of suggestions.

Likewise, Tartars were inhabitants from Central Asia and also inhabitants of hell (DRAKAKIS, 2010, p. 334). However, quite ironically, tartar was a kind of rich silk cloth traded by merchants in the Renaissance (DRAKAKIS, 2010, p. 334). Such an allusion suggests more of closeness and similarities than difference and distinction between the merchants and the Jews. In fact, it ambiguously presents Antonio and Shylock, on the one hand, distinct and different. However, on the other hand, it suggests that implicitly they are quite similar and share equivalent inner dispositions: hatred, resentment, mistrust, and hypocrisy.

Shylock's answer to the Duke reveals not only his inward unexplained reasons for his suit, but also suggests the inward uncontrolled dispositions of the human being:

I have possessed your grace of what I purpose;  
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn  
To have the due and forfeit of my bond:  
If you deny it, let the danger light  
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.  
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 humour: is it answered?  
What if my house be troubled with a rat  
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats  
To have it baned? What, are you answered yet?  
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' the nose,  
Cannot contain their urine. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 334-335)

In the first part of his speech Shylock affirms that he will have his bond, because of his swearing in the holy Sabbath. Shylock had probably sworn that he would take his revenge against Antonio. If the bond will not be granted him, he wishes that Venetian law and city be damaged. However, he explains he will give no answer to his desire of having a pound of flesh instead of his money, because it is not his humour of doing so. In the Renaissance trend of attributing feelings and affection to the humours is implied in Shylock's answer.

Then, Shylock presents a list of causes to other human obscure and uncontrolled dispositions of the mind which correspond to Shylock's inward dispositions and feelings. First, he refers to one's spending ten thousand ducats to kill a rat that disturbs a house; some men cannot see a "gaping pig", nor behold a cat; some cannot help urinating when they hear a bagpipe. According to Drakakis (2010), the reference to the "gaping pig" alludes to a proverb in the Renaissance of an "irrational dislike" (2010, p. 335). Likewise, all other references here hint at the irrational causes of human dispositions of the mind, inward feelings and thoughts. That is what McGinn points out when he alludes to the mysterious forces that control and determine inward feelings, ideas and thoughts. In fact, Shakespeare perceived that there are some feelings and thoughts which cannot be attributed to rational causes. He represents human inwardness as determined by mysterious forces which cannot be controlled and explained.

After that, Shylock exposes that inward obscure dimensions of the self are simply caused by affections, feelings and uncontrolled dispositions of the self:

for affection,  
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood  
Of what it likes or loathes. 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 woollen 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? (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 335-337)

Shylock declares that human affection is the source of passions, feelings, emotions and sensations. Shylock acknowledges that there is no reason for human inner dispositions of the mind. Drakakis suggests that in this speech the phrase “of force” is used because it is “driven by an irrational compulsion” (2010, p. 337). Shylock alludes to the human uncontrolled dimensions of the self, which strongly interfere in human choice and ethics. In that sense, in his *Mimesis* (2007), Auerbach illuminates such argument by stating that “in that moment and in others Shylock has something of human and obscure nature; in general, he does not lack the problematic depth, the energy in his appearance, the power in his passions and the violence in his utterance” (2007, p. 280).

In this speech, Shylock presents in black and white the cruelly double-faced attitude of the Christians, who disguise their attitude with a grave posture. Shylock works, in fact, as mirror which reminds the Christians of their own double-faced attitudes towards to the Jews. Also, he surprises us, revealing their sinister dispositions and actions to him and others. Anderson (1985, p. 126) puts that Shylock works as counterpoint to Christian hypocritical attitudes:

In any event, it is clear that Shylock himself is something less than a pattern for his people. In this much, he is a perfect complement to Antonio, whose brand of Christianity is every bit as repellent as Shylock's blood lust. Shylock far exceeds his Christian counterpart, however, in dramatic grandeur. Antonio's passionate outbursts against Jews in general and against Shylock in particular make only a second-hand appearance in the play itself Shylock reports them to us. Shakespeare chooses to give full and direct expression exclusively to Shylock's memorable counterattacks against Venetian racism.

Though Shylock's sentences about the irrational dispositions of the mind seem quite cynical and ironic sentences, he demonstrates a clearer view on the Christians' and their inward dispositions. He plays the role of a mirror which reflects what the Christians do not wish to see and acknowledge in their inwardness. Here there is another example of the Shakespearean mirroring device used as a means to build the mimesis of inwardness in

the play. The mirroring device, together with other techniques such as breaks in languages and silences, is a way of portraying the characters' inwardness and mental dispositions. In this case, Shakespeare hints at the Christians' inward dimensions by mirroring in Shylock's speech what they do not wish to see.

Then, Bassanio and Shylock have an argument on the relation between hatred and killing. Bassanio and Shylock discuss the nature of hatred and killing in a stichomythia, a rhetorical device constituted of a dialogue exchanged by two characters, wherein each one speaks one line. When Shylock replies to the Duke's speech, Bassanio criticises the Jew:

**Bassanio.** This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,  
To excuse the current of thy cruelty.  
**Shylock.** I am not bound to please thee with my answers.  
**Bassanio.** Do all men kill the things they do not love?  
**Shylock.** Hates any man the thing he would not kill?  
**Bassanio.** Every offence is not a hate at first.  
**Shylock.** What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?  
(SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 337)

In Shylock's answer, *bound* implies a fiscal or lawful contract, which refers implicitly to his *bond*. He assumes he is not obliged to submit himself to please them at the courtroom, because of his assumed right before the Venetian law. Furthermore, such stichomythia, taken from Seneca, reveals that Shylock hates not only Antonio, but in fact all Christians at courtroom. However, they are not talking the same language. This stichomythia reveals that Shylock's reason for his hate is not grasped by Bassanio, whereas Bassanio's meaning is not really in tune with Shylock's meaning and intentions. In the first couple of stichomythia Bassanio implies that a man does not kill everything he hates, whereas Shylock misreads Bassanio, twists his meaning and suggests that a man can kill even a thing he does not hate, or something that he likes. In this vague allusion to killing someone a man likes or loves, Shakespeare suggests Shylock inward sinister dispositions towards Antonio. That is why he seeks for killing Antonio as a desperate attempt to compensate his hatred and bitterness.

In the second couple of stichomythia Bassanio argues that an offence does not come necessarily from hate, whereas Shylock's idea implies the *lex talionis*, a hand for hand, and an eye for an eye: he would not bear a second offence. Moreover, Shylock's mentioning of a *serpent* associates Antonio with the figure of evil. The Christian Antonio is demonised by Shylock's revelation that he would not be bitten twice by the same serpent (DRAKAKIS,

2010, p. 337). The devil imagery used beforehand by the Christians to characterise Shylock is now used to describe Antonio and associate him to evil. In Shylock's lines of such stichomythia he twists the meaning of the lines uttered by the Christians for his own purpose: to convince his audience that he has the right to stand for law. However, one can see that his misreading Bassanio's words unveils his double-edged intentions at the courtroom.

In this moment, Antonio tries to convince the Christians that there is no use trying to convince and stop Shylock, because of his hard heart:

I pray you, think you question with the Jew:  
You may as well go stand upon the beach  
And bid the main flood bate his usual height;  
You may as well use question with the wolf  
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb;  
You may as well forbid the mountain pines  
To wag their high tops and to make no noise,  
When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven;  
You may as well do anything most hard,  
As seek to soften that--than which what's harder? --  
His Jewish heart! (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 337-338)

Ironically, Antonio's description of the Jew as a hard nut to be cracked goes against his own purpose. In fact, he praises Shylock's attitude and character. According to Anderson (1985, p. 126), in this speech "Antonio himself half acknowledges this supreme dignity in his enemy, even as he gives frightening expression to the depths of his own bigotry.". Besides that, he asserts that

Elements of Antonio's speech are clearly invidious: the implied comparison of his antagonist to a wolf, the embittered racism behind his reference to the 'Jewish heart.' But these elements clash with others which are substantial and striking: the comparison of Shylock's force of character with the force of the tides, the suggestion that his passion has some of the grandeur and beauty of mountain pines tossed by the wind. Half of this passage, if you will, chooses life and half chooses death. Half of Antonio's intelligence is locked in bigotry and half is illuminated by a sympathy richer and more compelling, perhaps, than any other human sympathy in the play. (ANDERSON, 1985, p. 127)

In a certain sense, he is submitting himself again to Shylock when he compares Shylock as the astonishing and tragic forces in nature. Antonio's sympathy to Shylock enhances his submissive attitude throughout the play. However, it also suggests

something hidden and unconscious in Antonio's inwardness: his ambivalent relation towards Shylock, the ur-father (the primordial father) of the play, the symbolic representation of the paternal figure. His ambivalent reaction towards Shylock is dichotomised, on the one hand, in his attitude of criticising Shylock; on the other hand, by implicitly suggesting his sympathy and even unconscious admiration. Antonio praises Shylock with the attribute of forces of nature. In a similar trend, G. Wilson Knight (1969, p. 87), in his essay *Tempest and Music*, observes that

Here we should observe also (i) the sea; (ii) the wolf, and (iii) the winds: all associated with human cruelty, and the forces of tragedy. Here the wolf, thus enclosed by the other two, stresses the association. Elsewhere Shylock is powerfully compared to a wolf in a speech which vividly outlines the Shakespearean intuition of the beast in man. [...] This play, as certainly as, and more tragically than, the induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, sets the beast in man against love and music. The tempest-beast association is always important. And here both are clearly to be related to Shylock and tragedy.

Knight's analysis of the association of Shylock to tragic forces, the cruel and beast dimensions of human beings and nature enhance the ambiguities conveyed in the play. Such ambiguity is not only signalled by Shylock's complex character, but also by Antonio. Shakespeare poised such ambiguities in the play to create a space of tension and conflict, as well as to suggest, in such ambiguities, Antonio's inwardness.

Furthermore, for everyone's surprise, no one comments on Antonio's speech. There is a silence here which signals that the courtroom could be surprised at Antonio's submissive attitude. Actually, it could even have rejected Antonio's comparison of Shylock as powerful beings in nature, a rejection which hints at what they do not want to see in the Jew. However, no one says anything about it, an attitude that seems rather conniving to Antonio's speech. When the merchant finishes his speech, Bassanio changes the issue of the argument: "For thy three thousand ducats here is six." (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 339). Nonetheless, Shakespeare trickily suggests that they take Antonio's speech for granted and no one comments on nor agrees with Antonio's speech. Such silence is suggestive of Shakespeare's ambiguous artistry, which creates between the lines subtle possible meaning which could only be understood by some well-educated playgoers.

At the end of Antonio's speech, he acknowledges once again that he is ready to have his judgement and be sacrificed by the Jew:

Therefore, I do beseech you,  
Make no more offers, use no farther means,  
But with all brief and plain conveniency  
Let me have judgment and the Jew his will. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 338-339)

Antonio refers to the bond with *will*, which means testament and his desire. But it also meant the male and female sexual organs in Shakespeare's age. In the sonnets, Shakespeare plays with his own nickname *Will* and the sexual and sensual connotations implied in his name, especially in Sonnet CXXXV. *Will* in this sonnet ambiguously means both male and female sexual organs, making a pun on Shakespeare's nickname. In this case, Antonio reiterates his acceptance of his doom to his desire of letting Shylock have his *will*: "Let me have judgment and the Jew his *will*" (emphasis added). Unconsciously Antonio willingly accepts Shylock's attempt of circumcision and, in a subtler level, castration.

Then, Bassanio offers him six thousand ducats, and Shylock assures that he would not take six ducats, but only his bond: "If every ducat in six thousand ducats/ Were in six parts and every part a ducat, / I would not draw them; I would have my bond." (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 339). His words reveal his bitterness and desire of revenge. The Duke's reply to Shylock's refusal of the six thousand ducats alludes again to the issue of mercy: "How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?" (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 339). Shylock answers that he fears nothing, since he did nothing wrong: "What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?" (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 339). He stands at the courtroom believing that he has lawful rights to demand his bond, since Antonio has forfeited his bond and did not pay it so far. Then, Shylock ironically says what the Christians do not want to see, mirroring at their faces their attitude towards the other and thus justifies his lawful right to his bond:

You have among you many a purchased slave,  
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,  
You use in abject and in slavish parts,  
Because you bought them: shall I say to you,  
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?  
Why sweat they under burthens? let their beds  
Be made as soft as yours and let their palates  
Be seasoned with such viands? You will answer  
'The slaves are ours:' so do I answer you:  
The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,

Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it.  
If you deny me, fie upon your law!  
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.  
I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it? (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 339-340)

Shylock compares his pound of flesh to the Christians' slaves, mules, asses and dogs: just as the Christians bought them, Shylock argues that he has bought the pound of flesh and therefore he can do anything with it. But he uses this analogy to convince that he wishes to have his bond. What Shylock asks is why they do not treat their slaves as their equals. In a certain way, it represents the inward uncontrolled feelings which interfere in human action, thoughts, ideas, judgement and attitudes. According to Ludwig and Ferreira (2019), as well as Sousa (2016), there is always a close relation between judgment, feelings and imagination. Thus, Shakespeare's perceptiveness of human psychological inner world is represented in speeches like this and others.

In addition to alluding to such obscure dimensions, Shylock ironically touches on the Christian hypocrisy of buying and using slaves. Moreover, he sarcastically suggests that they should marry their slaves to their daughters and sons, and give them the same comfort a Christian has. One may imagine that Shylock would prefer to marry his daughter Jessica to a slave, rather than to a Christian. In this same scene he affirms that he would rather marry Jessica to one of Barabbas' descendants than to a Christian: "I have a daughter; / Would any of the stock of Barabbas / Had been her husband rather than a Christian!" (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 354-3).

Conversely, Shylock unconsciously represents himself as being also judged, as soon as he declares that "I stand for judgement". Such speech is contrasted elsewhere in this scene when he says "I stand here for law" (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 344). Drakakis enhances that the verb *stand for* is ambiguous here, meaning "(1) to occupy the position of and (2) to represent. In so far as the conflict is allegorical, this is an example of the opposition between the Old Testament law and Christian imperative". (Drakakis, 2010, p. 340). Whereas Shylock stands for law, the *lex talionis*, Antonio stands for sacrifice. Ironically, Antonio who stands for sacrifice acknowledges his desire for sacrifice in a Christ-like personification of a lamb, or a "tainted wether" to re-present Christ's sacrifice on stage.



After that, Bassanio and Antonio have a sort intimate conversation:

**Bassanio.** Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet!  
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones and all,  
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.  
**Antonio.** I am a tainted wether of the flock,  
Meetest for death: the weakest kind of fruit  
Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me  
You cannot better be employed, Bassanio,  
Than to live still and write mine epitaph. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 341)

Bassanio's speech mirrors Antonio's desire for sacrifice. The word *flesh* was a standard euphemism for penis, not only in common texts in the Renaissance age, but also translations of the Holy Bible of the age. Antonio enhances his desire for sacrifice for Bassanio and his unconscious desire for castration. A "tainted wether" means a diseased castrated ram which epitomised his innermost masochistic feelings which will potentially be satisfied by Shylock's cutting off the pound of flesh. For Drakakis (2010, p. 341),

In substituting himself as a sacrifice for Bassanio, Antonio conflates both Old and New Testaments: (1) he replicates the action of Abraham, who sacrifices a ram in place of his son Isaac (Genesis, 22, 13), and (2) offers himself, Christ-like, as a sacrifice whose function is to take away 'the sin of the world' (John, 1, 29) [...]. This conflation is in stark contrast to the Jew's earlier reference to Old Testament narrative of Jacob and Esau, in which he justifies usury through an act of deception.

This is a moment when both reiterate their inner desire of sacrifice for each other epitomising their inward sinister dispositions. They justify their deeds for good causes, as if they were sanctifying their actions. These revealing speeches depict their inward dispositions and could sound quite weird and awkward for two men in the age. Shakespeare introduces in an intimate dialogue their innermost feelings as a device of representing their inward feelings and dispositions of the mind. Antonio's and Bassanio's relationship could be read by the audience as a blatant homoerotic relationship, which is reiterated here in their speech declaring their desire for being sacrificed for one another sake.

Moreover, it is quite interesting to observe that Antonio is almost all the time silent at the courtroom. This speech and the latter wherein he unconsciously praises Shylock as the forces in nature are the only speeches he utters until Portia undoes Shylock's bond. Such silence is very suggestive of his submissive attitude towards everyone at the

courtroom: to Portia, the Duke, Bassanio and Shylock. In contrast to Antonio's silence, Shylock's attitude is to speak most of the time in his own defence. Antonio's silence also suggests his acceptance of his fate and of Shylock's bond. Moreover, Portia is responsible for saving him from the Jew's bond. Throughout the play Shakespeare constructs Antonio as a very submissive and conniving character who cannot defend himself at the courtroom, but who, contradictorily, is able to kick and spurn the Jew. Shakespeare represents Antonio's inwardness by showing contradictions in Antonio's attitude, at times being silent or attacking Shylock publicly.

Furthermore, shame is implied in Antonio's attitude at the courtroom. Shylock's demanding his bond impinges shame upon Antonio. However, according to Fernie (2002), in his work *Shame in Shakespeare*, there is a contradiction in Christian shame. Shame is a feeling which cannot be controlled and dominates the self as a compulsive reaction to an act. Nevertheless, Fernie points that there is a contradiction in Christian shame:

To the Christian, only wickedness and impiety are shameful. In human experience and conduct there is often tension between shame of worldly humiliation and moral and spiritual shame, particularly for a man: for instance, it may seem shamefully passive not to retaliate but morally shameful to strike back. (2002, p. 13)

In the Christian view, being passive and resigned is really praised, whereas it sounds shameful not to defend himself. Also, Antonio's shame is mixed up with guilt. For Fernie, guilt is a legal concept:

It implies responsibility for an offence. Whereas shame is focused inward, on the damaged self, guilt focuses outward, on the subject's transgression or the violated victim or law or other authority. Conscience transmits a sense of guilt; a clear conscience brings an awareness of freedom from guilt. Much shame has nothing in common with guilt, because it is not to do with wronging another or breaking the law, although it can operate in that context; then the two emotions come together, but they may still be conceptually distinguished: guilt is other-directed, shame comes from within. [...] Shame requires renegotiation of the subject's relationship with itself; guilt requires negotiation with the party offended, usually by accepting punishment from it and offering some other compensation. (2002, p. 13-14)

Antonio feels both shame and guilt, whereas Shylock feels guilt and embarrassment is imposed on him. As Adelman (2008) points out, Shylock's act of circumcision/castration is a sort of punishment to expose Antonio's inside in the outside

and as a way of embarrassing him in front of the courtroom. Shakespearean mimesis of inwardness focuses on the suggestion of inward space of the self, represented by shame and guilt.

### **Final remarks**

This essay analysed the twists and turns in the trial scene. In the first moment, Shylock presents human obscure and uncontrolled dispositions of the mind which correspond to Shylock's inward dispositions and feelings. Likewise, he hints at the irrational causes of human dispositions of the mind, inward feelings and thoughts. Shakespeare perceived that there are some feelings and thoughts which cannot be attributed to rational causes. He represents human inwardness as determined by mysterious forces which cannot be controlled and explained.

Though Portia makes a beautiful speech on the quality of mercy, she shows no mercy to Shylock. Portia forges a trial which denies Shylock's bond and money. In fact, Portia's judgement represents the inflexible law in Venice. Though she permits Shylock to have the bond, she denies it, by claiming that he cannot have a drop of Christian blood. Portia turns out to be as inflexible as Shylock was during the trial. She embodies a hard heart to outwit Shylock's bond and take his fortune. Also, though Portia claims that no power can break Shylock's bond, it is suggested that her conscience interfered in her judgement. Conscience and judgement are intertwined in such a way that there is no possibility of assuming that judgement is pervaded only by rationality, because conscience and the inner dimensions interfere in judgement. Shakespeare thus represents the relation between judgement and conscience in the play.

### **References**

ADELMAN, Janet. **Blood relations:** Christian and Jew in *The merchant of Venice*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

ANDERSON, Douglas. The *Old Testament* presence in *The merchant of Venice*. **ELH**, v. 52, n. 1 (Spring, 1985), p. 119-132. The Johns Hopkins University. Available in: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872830>. Accessed: 08/04/2011.

AUERBACH, Erich. **Mimesis**: a representação da realidade na literatura ocidental. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2007.

BENSTON, Alice N. Portia, the law, and the tripartite structure of the *Merchant of Venice*. **Shakespeare Quarterly**, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer, 1979), pp. 367-385. Folger Shakespeare Library and George Washington University. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2869472>. Accessed: 08/04/2011 18:08

BERGER Jr, Harry. *Mercifixion in The Merchant of Venice: The Riches of Embarrassment*. **Renaissance Drama**, New Series, 38, 2010, pp. 3-45. In: [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/renaissance\\_drama/summary/v038/38.berger.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/renaissance_drama/summary/v038/38.berger.html), accessed on May, 1, 2012.

COLLINS, Stephen L. **From divine cosmos to sovereign state**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

COSTA LIMA, Luiz. **A literatura e o leitor**: textos de estética da recepção. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2011.

CRITCHLEY, Simon; MCCARTHY, Tom. Universal Shylockery: money and morality in "The Merchant of Venice". **Diacritics**, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 2-17 Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3805828> Accessed: 20/01/2011 10:28

DRAKAKIS, John. Historical difference and Venetian patriarchy. In: COYLE, Martin. **The Merchant of Venice**: contemporary critical essays. Londres: Macmillan: 1998. (New Casebooks), pp. 181-208.

FERNIE, Ewan. **Shame in Shakespeare**. Series Accents on Shakespeare. London: Routledge, 2002.

FERREIRA, Rejane de Souza; LUDWIG, C. R. **Life and Fiction**: imagination and literary creation in Atonement. **Porto das Letras**, ISSN 2448-0819, v. 5, n. 2, p. 58-77, 2019.

HINELY, Jan Lawson. Bond Priorities in The Merchant of Venice. **Studies in English Literature**, 1500-1900, Vol. 20, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1980), pp. 217-239. Rice University, in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/450170>, Accessed: 20/01/2011.

HIRSCHFELD, Heather Anne. 'We All Expect a Gentle Answer, Jew': The Merchant of Venice and the Psychotheology of Conversion. **ELH**, Vol. 73, Number 1, Spring 2006, pp. 61-81. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

JORDAN, Constance; CUNNINGHAM, Karen (Ed.). **The law in Shakespeare**. Londres: Macmillan, 2010.

LUDWIG, Carlos Roberto. Adaptação e re-criação de Ricardo III, de Al Pacino. **Porto das Letras**, ISSN 2448-0819, v. 3, n. 2, jul.-dez. 2017. p. 202-217.

LUDWIG, Carlos Roberto. Inwardness and subjectivity in Early Renaissance. **Porto das Letras**, ISSN 2448-0819, v. 4, n. 2, p. 134-164, jul.-dez. 2018.

LUDWIG, Carlos Roberto. Judgment, conscience and Shylock's bond. **Porto das Letras**, ISSN 2448-0819, v. 6, n. 1, p. 110-139, jan.-jun. 2020.

MARLOWE, Christopher. **The complete plays**. Edited by Frank Romany & Robert Lindsey. London: Penguin, 2003.

MAUS, Katharine Eisaman. **Inwardness and theater in the English Renaissance**. Chicago e London: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

McGINN, Colin. **Shakespeare's philosophy: discovering the meaning behind the plays**. New York: Harper, 2007.

SHAKESPEARE, William. **Complete works**. Londres: Wordsworth Editions, 2007.

SHAKESPEARE, William. **Richard III**. Edited by Antony Hammond. New York: Matheun, 1997.

SHAKESPEARE, William. **Shakespeare's sonnets**. Edited by Katherine Kuncan-Jones. Croatia: ITP, 1997.

SHAKESPEARE, William. **Macbeth**. Edited by Kenneth Muir. London: Arden, 1997.

SHAKESPEARE, William. **The merchant of Venice**. Edited by John Drakakis. London: Arden, 2010.

SHAPIRO, James. **Shakespeare and the Jews**. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

SOUSA, Tatiane da Costa Pereira. As manipulações narrativas em *Atonement* de Ian McEwan. **Porto das Letras**, ISSN 2448-0819, v. 2, n. 2, jul.-dez. 2016. p. 135-151.

Submetido em: 06 jun. 2020

Aprovado em: 09 nov. 2020