

ANTONIO'S INWARDNESS AND FORECLOSURE IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

INTERIORIDADE E FORCLUSÃO DE ANTÔNIO EM *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

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Abstract: This article discusses the ambiguous representation of the merchant Antonio in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Antonio's relationship to his father figure is projected through the hatred and sadness in Shylock's figure. However, Antonio's father figure is completely absent in the play. Thus, his inexplicable anger towards Shylock may reveal primitive feelings towards his father figure. His masochistic desire and fear of castration, which can potentially be fulfilled by Shylock, increase his anxiety to his father figure. He accepts the idea of castration and imagines himself a castrated ram. However, the cause of such anxiety is constantly denied by Antonio, but projected into the play's texture in verbal slips and contradictions. Thus, the other characters are depicted as Antonio's correlate figures, mirroring similar feelings felt by him.

Key-Words: Inwardness; Foreclosure; *The Merchant of Venice*

Resumo: Este artigo discute a representação ambígua do mercador Antônio, na peça *The Merchant of Venice*, de William Shakespeare. A relação de Antonio com sua figura paterna, é projetada por meio do ódio e tristeza na figura de Shylock. No entanto, a figura paterna de Antonio está completamente ausente da peça. Assim, sua inexplicável raiva para com Shylock pode revelar sentimentos primitivos em relação à figura paterna. Seu desejo masoquista e medo da castração, que pode ser potencialmente realizado por Shylock, aumentam sua ansiedade em relação à figura paterna. Ele aceita a ideia de castração e se imagina um carneiro castrado. No entanto, a causa de tal ansiedade é constantemente negada por Antonio, mas projetada na textura da peça em atos falhos e contradições. Assim, os demais personagens assumem o papel de figuras correlatas de Antonio, espelhando sentimentos semelhantes por ele sentidos.

Palavras-Chaves: Interioridade; Forclusão; *The Merchant of Venice*

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1 INTRODUCTION

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, which is suggested by the Shakespearean mirroring device, silences, 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, molds and shapes of the appearances could be calculated pretentions, 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.

2 INWARDNESS AND SUBJECTIVITY

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. In fact, the notion of modern subject is invested with different traits enhanced by diverse philosophical and psychoanalytic discourses and assumptions. Freud depicts the self as endlessly lost and dissolving in the confusion of the unconscious. Human being is inexorably split by an existential shame supervened by superegoical mechanisms which control and determine the ego. Lacan's subject is

determined by the emergence of another figure on the mirror, which makes him aware that the complete image projected onto the other is merely the illusion of totality of the self. In the *Stade du Mirror* essay, Lacan parts from the neurological assumption that the human beings are born in a foetus form, who cannot control its movements, walk, or even keep in an erect position. He points out that until the six months old the baby expresses itself in a set of spasmodic and joyful reaction in its gestures and movements. Then, the mirror phase is considered by Lacan as an *identification* process, whereby it sees mainly in the mother's presence just a continuum of its body, as if the mother were its own self. The only thing it identifies is itself joined with the breast of the mother. This is an identification of the alienated image of the identity, which can only be configured through the *imago*. This alienated imago is a hallucinatory projection, which constitutes the foetus' identity for a while, in a phagocytosis process, through which the foetus-baby imaginarily wishes to cannibalise the imago. This mirror's stage is more likely a fortress where the self produces barriers to be isolated. For Lacan,

Correlatively, the formation of the Self symbolizes oneirically in a fortified field, or even a stadium, which spreads out, from the internal arena until its walls, until its limits of rubble and swamps, two fields of opposing fight wherein the subject is entangled seeking for the high distant inner castle, whose form [...] astonishingly symbolizes the *id* [...] We see realized these framework of the fortified work whose metaphor spontaneously emerges, as if it had popped up from the very symptoms of the subject, in order to designate the mechanisms of inversion, isolation, redoubling, annulation and drive of the obsessive neurosis. (LACAN, 1998, p. 101).

This fortress image could be seen as the *id* image and construction. However, when the baby recognises somebody else's presence, like the father's presence, it immediately feels this paternal interference as a 'primordial hatred', making the baby split from the specular image projected onto the mother. Such split from the image constitutes the moment of the individuation.

Lacan introduces the bi-dimensional mirror in the image before the oedipal phase. It suggests the unified image, which is so important due to the child's lack of notion of bodily integrity. This notion complements the bodily totality that the self is not unified to the image. It is menaced by the other's presence and feels then the consequent resentment of such menace. Thus, this non-existent subject projects itself onto the other, as if it would jump into the other's figure. The recognition of the other is shown as negation, the other is negated as saying – 'he is not me' – and by negating the other, the baby imaginatively tries to occupy the place of the other. When the third element is acknowledged, then something like a symbolic identification is constituted by rivalry. Thus, the mirror's stage is an idealisation of the image, though it negates the other, because fantasmatically it has to be sort of eliminated, which leads to rivalry, distrust, or late mimetic hostility. According to Lacan, 'this moment when the mirror's stage is constituted, it inaugurates, by the identification with the *imago* of the other and by the primordial drama of jealousy [...], the dialectic which from thim moment onwards links the Self to the socially elaborated situations.' (LACAN, 1998, p. 101). And the child being a foetus does not recognise the mother as the other, but just as the same person. Then the recognition of the presence of the father leads to the consequent recognition of selfness and the other. As Lacan points out,

This development is experienced as a temporal dialectics which projects decisively in history of the individual's formation: the *stade du miroir* is a drama whose inner impulse precipitates itself from the insufficiency to an anticipation – and which makes for the subject, got in this allurements of spatial identification, the fantasies which happen from the moment of a lacerate image of the body until a form of totality [...] and until the moment when the armor finally taken upon himself of an alienated identity will mark in its rigid structure all his mental development. Thus, the split of the circle of the *Innenwelt* to the *Umwelt* generates the inexhaustive quadrature of the inventorying of the *I*. (LACAN, 1998, p. 100).

And from the image of this "lacerate body" from this moment on, the

foetus can just develop being identified in this compulsively primordial process of phagocytises in every image it sees which reminds it of the *imagos* incrusted in its unconscious. Thus, the subject is the Being of the lack, which always seek for satisfying the endless necessity of totality imagined the mirror's stage.

Face to such subtleties of modern conception of subjectivity, the term *inwardness* seems to be more feasible to Shakespeare's drama, because it corresponds to the English Renaissance notion of inwardness. Our modern concept of subjectivity is a term which entered in the English lexicon just later on in the late 18th century. Although some could argue that inwardness is merely a synonym for subjectivity, it seems rather specific to the age, because the emergence of discussions and writings about it demonstrate a concern of defining and grasping it with Renaissance epochal frameworks. Its conception was evident and defined only in the opposition between inwardness and outwardness: inwardness was said to be true and sincere, whereas outwardness was not always able to express the inward space and dimensions of the self. Thus, outwardness or appearances of the self could be invented and pretended. However, it is not the result of language and rational construction, but a historical, cultural, social and even institutional construct of the age, which presumed to perceive the individual's inward feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Inwardness is the perception of the inner-self from outside to an imagined inside, perceived in the bodily traits and gestures, whereas subjectivity is the rhetorical construct of imaginable inner feelings in poetry and philosophy, in an opposite movement form the inside to the outside. Although the play will be analysed in terms of inwardness, sometimes it is necessary to illuminate some traits of inwardness by using some modern psychoanalytical assumptions which contribute to understand Shakespeare's mimesis of inwardness. It is worth noticing that any analysis of inwardness will be inevitably pervaded by our modern sense of self and subjectivity.

This dichotomy between inwardness and outwardness was a noticeable

trait in Renaissance especially for Shakespeare's coevals. They were quite aware and worried about the relations between the outward and inward dimensions of the self and of things. In that sense, Katharine Eisaman Maus, in her work *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (1995), analyses inwardness opposed to outwardness. She takes into account the differences between an unutterable inner-self and a theatrical outward which could be intentionally shaped. She studies the epistemological anxieties caused by this gap, the social practices created to keep them and the political purposes which they serve for. Despite the controversies about the consciousness of inwardness, Katharine Maus observes the emergence of a great number of speeches, which presented distinctions between inwardness and outwardness as a common place and a rhetorical and discursive distinction very familiar in 16th and 17th centuries. For instance, Edward Jorden in *A Brief Discourse of a Diseased Called the Suffocation of the Mother* notes the differences between the inward and outward causes of that disease; John Dod and Robert Cleaver distinguish two main manners of violating the *Ten Commandments*: inward and outward transgressions; William Perkins distinguishes, in his essay *The whole treatise of the cases of the conscience* (1606), the inward and outward sadness, inward and outward cleanness, inward and outward regret, inward and outward veneration.² Likewise, beforehand Augustine had defined two distinctions in human beings: the *homo interior* and the *homo exterior* (1995, p. 16), the *inward man* and the *outward man*. Such distinctions were never

² These discourses of the age also defended a cautious distinction between the inward and the outward dimensions. In King James' work *Basilicon Doron*, the king himself recommended a careful orchestration of the actions and visual gestures of the king, which can reveal his virtue, for it serves to reveal the inwardness and interpret 'the inward disposition of the mind' to those who cannot see beyond the visual signs and, therefore, 'must only judge of him by the outward appearance' (1995, p. 05). Another example is that of George Hakewill, in his work *A Discourse against flattery* (1611). Hakewill describes ways to recognize a hypocrite: "wolves in sheep's clothing, richly decorated apothecary boxes with poisons inside, beautifully bound tragedies, snowy Mount Etnas with volcanic interiors." (1995, p. 05-06). The flatterers of the court awaken fear and disregard of political commentators of the 16th and 17th centuries, because 'outwardly they show themselves with the face of friendship, within they have more malice than the sings of scorpions'. (1995, p. 05-06).

questioned by polemicists of the age.

According to Maus, the distinctions between the inward and the outward overcome this visibility – and thus its validity is untouchable. The outward, on the contrary, was distrusted and sometimes considered false, partial, deceitful, and unsubstantial. (1995, p. 04-05). Tudor’s and Stuart’s polemicists such as Stubbes, Northbrooke, Rankin, Gosson, and Prynne acknowledged the separability of a favored and ‘truthful’ inwardness and a sociably visible outwardness, though counterfeited. They approximated such separation, stating that men should seem outwardly what they were and felt inwardly: “People and things *are* inwardly”; “people and things *seem* outwardly”. (MAUS, 1995, p. 4-5). Thus, personal inwardness was problematically undermined by the epistemological anxieties, and created the gap between the inaccessible inwardness and the possible counterfeited outwardness.

In that sense, some considered impossible to perceive what an individual actually felt and was inwardly. But according to other theorists, the distinction between the inward space and the outward appearances was necessary, because it was impossible to know a man simply through his appearance. As Maus states,

The alienation or potential alienation of surface from depth, of appearance from truth, means that a person’s thoughts and passions, imagined as properties of the hidden interior, are not immediately accessible to other people. Hamlet is not original in maintaining that the sight of his downcast visage is not the same as the sight of his grief. (1995, p. 05).

That was an anguishing problem in a time when new religious practices began to doubt ancient rituals, in exchange of refrained and less theatrical rituals, preached mainly by Protestantism. In such case, Protestants considered themselves practicing inward truth, whereas they accused Catholics of cultivating only outward deceitful rituals (Maus, 1995, p. 15 and 17). In her

opinion, inwardness was shaped mainly by religious impositions which syncretized different forms of rites, provoking then the distrust and anxiety to those new forms of rites and doctrines. Consequently, the perception of a person's gestures and appearances unleashed the conjecturing of what this person might be thinking and feeling. Maus is quite aware of the possibility of failure in trying to perceive inwardness: 'The inwardness of persons is constituted by the *disparity* between what a limited, fallible human observer can see and what is available to the hypostasized divine observer [...]. This disparity is subject to fluctuation, and to intentional manipulation both by the viewer and the viewed.' (1995, p. 11). The possibility of deception was one of the main concerns, but the possibility of fluctuation and incongruities were also taken into account, since the self was not just a fixed and full-constituted entity, but was constantly dependent on outward cultural constructs, such as the determining rules of the State, church, family, school, and so forth. In that sense, Maus conceptualizes inwardness both historically and culturally:

if the religious categories in which the English Renaissance tried to comprehend itself often seem to us to involve glaring mystifications of social and political dynamics, so too our secularist interpretative axioms may blind us to their own explanatory limitations. Perhaps our suspicion of privacy, inwardness, subjectivity, soul, and so forth – our conviction that such terms beg to be debunked – has less to do with what counts as a satisfactory explanation. (1995, p. 27).

She is conscious of our limited tools of analysis due to this epistemological gap between the outward perception and inward truth. But there is no possibility of achieving an 'inward truth', even after the long journeys of Psychoanalysis searching for an inward truth. For example, Hamlet never really finds his truth. Anticipating our 21st century experience, we ultimately never come to know ourselves, as in Freud's *unendliche Analyse*: infinite analysis points to that problem of endless erring in the labyrinth of inwardness, due to the lack or rejection of outward, objective limits and goals.

Though all the attempts undertaken in the Renaissance to define inwardness could have failed, the acknowledgement of the existence of an unsearchable inward space proves the existence of its notion in that age.

However, different from our modern concept of subjectivity, inwardness suffered of a lack and failure of philosophical definition:

It may be well true that Renaissance notion of interior truth turn out to be philosophically defective: they are rarely elaborately or rigorously argued for. But lack of rigor neither limits the extent of, nor determines the nature of, the power such ideas can exert. Murkiness and illogicality may, in fact, enhance rather than limit their potency. (1995, p. 28).

It is rather philosophically and even psychologically limited. Despite such lack and failure, there were some attempts to overcome these problems. For example, some polemist such as Thomas Wright created a treatise of techniques to discover people's minds. Nevertheless, he stated that no one can 'enter a man's heart' (1995, p. 29). Such attempts were quite contradictory, because the polemist and writers created evasive arguments to demonstrate their concern. Thus, Maus defines inwardness and makes a distinction between historical and philosophical categories:

So distinguishing between what I would call a "philosophical" argument and a "historical" one seems important. And this distinction is related to another: the difference between the origins of an idea and its effects once it becomes culturally available. The new-historicist critique insists, correctly in my view, that the "self" is not independent of or prior to its social context. (1995, p. 28).

In that sense, there are two important fantasies in English Renaissance: the first one is that 'selves are obscure, hidden, ineffable'; the other fantasy is that the selves are 'fully manifest or capable of being made fully manifest'. (1995, p. 28). Maus proposes that these notions seem to be contradictory, 'but again and again they are voiced together, so that they seem less self-cancelling

than symbiotically related or mutually constitutive.’ (1995, p. 29). Therefore, she views inwardness as constituted not by a determined set of features, but by variable and fluctuant traits. Our modern concept of subjectivity is voiced by philosophical and psychoanalytical frameworks, whereas Renaissance notion of inwardness was imagined as a rather social, historical and cultural construct. Thus, Maus concentrates her analysis on the historical and cultural arguments. She disdains philosophical and psychoanalytic assumptions, even though it is evident the psychoanalytic framework working on the background of her analysis. As she asserts,

‘Subjectivity’ is often a loose and varied collection of assumptions, intuitions, and practices that do not all logically entail one another and need not appear together at the same cultural moment. A well-developed rhetoric of inward truth, for instance, may exist in a society that never imagines that such inwardness might provide a basis of political rights. The intuition that sexual and family relations are ‘private’ may, but need not, coincide with strong feelings about the ‘unity of the subject’, or with convictions about freedom, self-determination, or uniqueness of individuals, or with the sense that the self constitutes a form of property. It seems to me a mistake to assume that all these matters can be discussed at once, that they are necessarily part of the same cluster of ideas. (1995, p. 29-30).

In that sense, inwardness can present just an isolated feature or few elements voiced together, whereas subjectivity comprehends symbiotic psychic dimensions of the self. However, Maus is rather interested in what she defines as ‘rhetoric of inwardness’ (1995, p. 30), i. e., the linguistic, discursive, cultural, and social constellations that pervade inwardness. The concern about cultural and historical issues locates the difference of our philosophical and psychological concerns and the Renaissance concerns about inwardness. Thus, there is no determined set of constellations which defines inwardness in an age, even though they can appear together.

In addition to defining inwardness Maus states that theatre historians researched a significant quantity of data about the representations of the plays

and the audience's aesthetic experience. In her opinion,

They speculate about what kinds of people attended the theater and what such people were likely to notice. They make assumptions about the ways in which the play structured the experience of spectators, and about the ways in which spectators may have resisted the imposition of that structure. My own methods are unavoidably involved in the same combination of suspicion and inductive empathy I shall be endeavoring to discuss. (1995, p. 34).

If in Maus's analysis inwardness is an epochal notion determined by cultural, historical, social dimensions, it is important to refer to many historical details, for example, those presented by Kaplan (2002) and Shapiro (1996). Thus, when one sees the play and its characters through historical facts, one can see them completely different and sometimes in an opposed way. Coupled with that, it is necessary to imagine the audience's reaction towards the characters' attitudes and act on stage; thereto it is worth using texts from Renaissance age, because conjecturing what the auditors's reaction could be in the theatre provides the analysis with multiple possibilities of types and qualities of inwardness.

In that sense, Drakakis (1998)³ points out the necessity of 'a simultaneous awareness of the *difference* which a text such as *The Merchant of Venice* generates between its own historically specific concerns and those of the modern world, and of its *sameness* in so far as those historical differences can be collapsed into a timeless presence.' (1998, p. 182). For Drakakis, in a play such as this, complex and problematic historical elements are frequently 'filtered out through the cognate processes of reading and theatrical representation'. (1998, p. 182). Thus, it is necessary (as in Brecht's words) to analyze in necessarily 'critical mediations of literary productions of the past'

³ See John Drakakis' essay *Historical difference and Venetian Patriarchy*, in COYLE, Martin. **The Merchant of Venice**: contemporary critical essays. Londres: Macmillan: 1998. (New Casebooks), pp. 181-208.

with our own views on the play.

Furthermore, there are some psychic dimensions which Shakespeare represented in his characters. He perceived, at least intuitively, that there are some mysterious dimensions which the individual cannot control in his inward dispositions of the mind. Shakespeare overcame his contemporary writers and represented those mysterious uncontrolled dimensions of the self in the drama. Though Maus simply analyses inwardness as a cultural and historical event, Shakespeare saw more than that: he saw some obscure and mysterious psychic traits which determined and shaped inwardness. The inward mysterious forces of the self, pointed out by McGinn (2007), are obscure uncontrolled dimensions of the inward space of the self. It is something Shakespeare perceived in common human behavior and represented it through the characters' silences, verbal slips, ruptures of speech, the character's conscience, pathos, gestures, and bodily feelings. Such mysteriousness is incrustated in inwardness and determines the self's actions, feelings, emotions, ideas and thoughts.

3 SEALING THE BOND: AFFECTIVE AND FISCAL RELATIONS

Shylock proposes the bond as if he had forgotten his former hatred to Antonio. Then Shylock says that he wants to be a friend to Antonio:

Why, look you, how you storm!
I would be friends with you and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
Supply your present wants and take no doit
Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me:
This is kind I offer. (SHAKESPEARE, 1992, p. 37).

Shylock reveals that he would be Antonio's friend and lend him money gratis. He proposes a bond without interest as a sort of kindness. For Goddard,

it is evident now that ‘Antonio’s anger is as good as a confession, but, clad in the pride of race and virtue, he does not realize it.’ (1969, p. 154). Goddard thinks that hitherto Antonio seemed to be superior to Shylock. However, his anger to Shylock suggests the opposite: ‘the significant thing is that the man who loses his temper is below the man who keeps his self-control. A small man meets anger with anger’. (1969, p. 154). Antonio’s anger suggests that he is inferior to Shylock, whereas Shylock’s offer of the merry bond suggests Shylock’s proposal to be friend with Antonio. Yet he is quite tricky in his proposal. So far in the play no one imagines that he will really require his bond. However, Shylock will only attack Antonio as a retaliatory act for Jessica’s elopement and disbursement of his money.

Furthermore, the word ‘kind’ will be echoed in Bassanio’s answer. Bassanio considers Shylock’s attitude very kind, because he is very interested in the money: ‘This were kindness’ (I, iii, 139). Shylock proposes thus the bond:

This kindness will I show.
Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
If you repay me not on such a day,
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me. (SHAKESPEARE, 1992, p. 37).

With his bond, Shylock entraps Antonio, yet the merchant does not realise that at first. Moreover, it is odd that in his bond he wants to take the pound of flesh from the part of the body which pleases him. But in the trial scene it is clear that the bond determines that the pound of flesh must be taken from Antonio’s breast. No one knows yet which part of Antonio’s body will be taken. In that sense, James Shapiro (1998, p. 81) suggests the implicit meaning of castration in this bound. He argues that the verb used by Shylock ‘cut off’

unleashes the anxiety of actual castration in the Jewish myth of ritual murder:

'cut off' could easily suggest taking the knife to a male victim's genitals. In fact, the judgement read to convicted male traitors and felons in Shakespeare's day includes the decree that 'at the place of execution ... you are to be hanged by the neck, and being alive cut down, and your privy-members to be cut off.' (1998, p. 81).

Thus, the phrasal-verb 'cut off' means dilacerate and castrate in this speech. Besides that, the word 'flesh' was 'a standard euphemism for penis, not only in Elizabethan Bibles, but in popular writing' (1998, p. 81). Castration is not an anxiety which is far from the play, according to Shapiro. Not only in Antonio's own description of himself as a 'tainted wether' (a castrated ram) in the trial scene, but also in Salerio's joke that Jessica has Shylock's stones, also a slang for testicles in that age. (1998, p. 81). Coupled with that, according to Janet Adelman (2008), circumcision is paralleled with castration in the play. Shylock therefore potentializes Antonio's fantasy of castration in his attempt to 'circumcise' him in the play.

Very oddly Antonio accepts his bond very abruptly, without pondering enough about it: 'Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond / And say there is much kindness in the Jew.' (SHAKESPEARE, 1992, p. 38). It is very strange that Antonio accepts such a bond quite willingly and without hesitation. Sinfield (1998) points out that 'Antonio's desperate bond with Shylock is his way of holding on Bassanio' (1998, p. 164).⁴ Also, Hinely enhances such fact as well: 'When Shylock first broaches the terms of the "merry" bond, Antonio, even though he has just insulted Shylock and dared him to do his worst, accepts without hesitation'. (1980, p. 223). He is quite confident of his 'ventures' in the ocean, without acknowledging the dangers in the sea. Though Bassanio opposes himself to such a bond, Antonio will very proudly state that he will have his

⁴ See Alan Sinfield's essay *How to read The Merchant of Venice without being Heterosexualist*, in COYLE, Martin. **The Merchant of Venice: contemporary critical essays**. Londres: Macmillan: 1998. (New Casebooks)

ships back a month before the time. As Antonio says that ‘I do expect return / Of thrice three times the value of this bond’ (I, iii, 150-151), which reveals again that he takes interest in a different way, not by usury, but by buying and selling goods with profit. Then Bassanio reacts to the ‘merry bond’: ‘You shall not seal to such a bond for me: / I’ll rather dwell in my necessity.’ (SHAKESPEARE, 1992, p. 37). Antonio feels quite embarrassed of what he hears from Bassanio, just as he feels embarrassed to take money from a Jew. For Berger Jr (2010) ⁵

He is embarrassed both by the need to beg a loan from the Jew he despises and by Bassanio’s uneasiness during the transaction. The text itself presents his embarrassment with embarrassed reserve. It hints at but never fully reveals the extent and character of his investment in his embarrassed and embarrassing protégé. (2010, p. 4).

Then, Shylock reacts to Bassanio’s mistrust very ironically and sarcastically to Bassanio’s distrust:

O father Abram, what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this;
If he should break his day, what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?
A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship:
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not. (SHAKESPEARE, 1992,
p. 37-38).

Shylock ironically disdains Bassanio’s mistrust that Antonio can neither take the bond nor repay it. Thus, he justifies that having human flesh is not so valuable as meat. He distrusts him, because the bond seems absurd and dangerous to Bassanio, yet Antonio and Shylock try to convince him of the

⁵ See Harry Berger Jr’s *Mercifixion in The Merchant of Venice: The Riches of Embarrassment*, 2012.

contrary. Shylock tries to hide his anger, but he states that they should not wrong him, otherwise he would revenge himself. Apparently he wants to be friend to Antonio and Bassanio, even though Bassanio mistrusts him. No one knows until this moment how he is going to react until the end of the play. He warns Antonio of his anger and resentful feelings, in case he does not repay the bond. He makes believe that he is kind and friendly, constructing a sense of goodness in his face, which hides his innermost sinister intentions and feelings towards Antonio and the Christians. Here Shylock embodies the theatrical side of personality, highlighted by McGinn (2007, p. 10) and Greenblatt (1984, p. 1-10). Shakespeare represents Shylock as tricky, villain and double-faced, hiding his real innermost intentions: to take his revenge on Antonio.

The bond he proposes a pound of flesh and becomes a symbolic and emotional motif in the play, a bond which is echoed by many characters such as Portia who says that she is bond to her father's will. According to Hinely (1980), the play is pervaded by the unifying theme of bond, and its 'magnetic center' is the bond priorities. Every character in the play is more or less connected to bond relations, bonds of blood and service which organise the society; the affective 'bonds of love and friendship which make society endurable'; and the 'unnatural bonds' of commerce, which unite people who share no other bonds (1980, p. 218). Thus, not only Shylock's challenging bond will pervade the play, but the play naturally embodies the idea of bonds as its 'magnetic centre'. All the characters act and feel according to their bonds, whether they respect or break their bonds. But it is noteworthy that Shylock's bond incarnates the blood, flesh, and the monetary bonds of the play, as well as represents the affective and emotional bonds shared by all characters.

4 ANTONIO'S INWARD SINISTER DIMENSIONS AND FORECLOSURE

Antonio's aggressive response to Shylock's report of his mistreatment

reveals his capacity of imposing himself and building his male identity only through violence and aggression against an *alien*. Antonio feels proud of having wronged, spit and spurned Shylock. By so doing he shows his only way of imposing power and constructing his identity. However, he is a coward, because he is submissive to Bassanio, yet contradictorily he treats Shylock with such violent attitudes. He can neither oppose nor react to Salerio's and Salarino's mockings about his sadness and weariness. His resignation is enhanced, because he will be only able to free himself of Shylock's bond by Portia's interference in the courtroom. Before that, he is resigned and satisfied of suffering the penalty of the bond. His repressed anger to the other is projected on the alien figure, Shylock.

Moreover, Antonio's attitude shows his loss of control and his childish attitude of affronting Shylock. Shylock says that he hates Antonio because he called him dog, spat on his garbardine, and lowered his profits. At least he expresses his reasons of his hatred to Antonio. However, that is not what happens to Antonio. Harold Goddard⁶ states that 'Shylock is a usurer, it will be said, while Antonio is so noble that the mere mention of interest is abhorrent to him. Why, then, does not Antonio state his objection to it like a rational being instead of arguing with kicks and saliva?' (1969, p. 148). His attitude to Shylock is childish and his violence suggests his hatred is disguised by his pretentious goodness to Bassanio and the other merchants. Also, according to Goddard,

unless all signs fail, Antonio, like Shylock, is a victim of forces from far below the threshold of consciousness. [...] Shakespeare is careful to leave no doubt on this point, but, appropriately, he buries the evidence a bit beneath the surface: Antonio abhors Shylock because he catches his own reflection in this face. [...] It is Antonio's unconscious protest against this humiliating truth that is the secret of his antipathy'. (1969, p. 148).

⁶ See Goddard's essay *The Three Caskets*, in John Wilders' casebook **Shakespeare: *The Merchant of Venice***, 1969.

That is an interesting suggestion to the problem of Antonio's violence to Shylock. But the problem is deeper. Goddard states some details about Antonio's sadness. Antonio is a bachelor and has invested his life in friendly affection and that his denegation that 'he is in love may hint at some long-nourished disappointment of the affections'. (1969, p. 152). His loss of someone's affections could be suggestive here. Perhaps Antonio fears he is losing Bassanio, but his inward feelings seem to be rooted in something deeper. Goddard suggests psychoanalytically that Antonio's feelings may be caused by an unknown person in his past:

Those who drown themselves in business or in other work in order to forget what refuses to be forgotten are generally characterized by a quiet melancholy interrupted by spells of irritation or sudden spasms of passion directed to some person or thing that, if analyzed, is found to be the symbol of the error that has spoiled their lives. (1969, p. 152).

Goddard's analysis leads us to some further suppositions. Antonio drives his anger to Shylock because Shylock embodies some characteristics which enable the projection of the 'symbol of the error' that spoiled his life. Antonio sees in Shylock the mirror of what is most disgusting to him and he does not want to see: the representation of his paternal figure re-imagined in and projected on Shylock. Such fact is corroborated by Adelman's conclusive definition of Shylock as the *ur-father* of the play. Janet Adelman, in *Blood Relations* (2008), Shylock represents the *ur-father*, the primordial father, coded as a hyper-masculine figure: 'he is the avatar of the terrifying patriarch with the knife, the *ur-father* not only of Jessica but of Christians and Christianity' (2008, p. 131). His proposal of the bond – a pound of flesh – symbolically and phantasmatically enables the revenge of paternal figure, the primordial father who returns to punish him for his mistreatment. The proposal of his bond

potentially satisfies Antonio's masochist desire and fear of castration.⁷ Antonio as a masochist is enhanced by the fact that he may take pleasure of Bassanio's rejection and of Shylock's potential act of circumcision/castration. In that sense, Luke Wilson states that 'for Antonio sadness and happiness are indistinguishable, just as pleasure and pain tend to be for the masochist'. (2010, p. 130).⁸ His initial sadness may be his purest delight of pain. Goddard⁹ defines him with one of the motifs of the play: 'Antonio is the silver casket. He got as much as he deserved: material success and a suicidal melancholy'. (1969, p. 153). He feels satisfaction in his unhappiness and masochist dispositions. Shakespeare portrays Shylock's and Antonio's relation as a very ambiguous in order to depict the inner obscure uncontrolled dimensions in Antonio's inwardness: his anxiety towards the paternal figure, re-imagined in Shylock.

In that sense, it is noteworthy that Shakespeare created a mirroring device¹⁰ to double feelings and anxieties in the play. Thereby, Antonio presents some similarities to Portia. She starts the scene complaining that she is bond to her father's will, whereas Antonio willingly seals a bond with Shylock. They feel sadness and weariness, equalising their inwardness. They are correlative characters whose similarities suggest that, if Portia is sad and weary because of her father's will and because of his powerful present absence, Antonio's unexplainable weariness and sadness, doubled in Portia, is caused in the same cause of her feelings and anxieties. Therefore, Portia's anxiety to her paternal figure mirrors Antonio's anxiety regarding the paternal figure which, as in

⁷ For Antonio's masochist desire for castration, see Adelman (2008), pp. 99-133.

⁸ See Luke Wilson's *Drama and Marine Insurance*, in **The Law in Shakespeare**, edited by Jordan and Cunningham, 2010.

⁹ Goddard remarks that 'commentators have commonly either sidestepped the problem or explained Antonio's melancholy as a presentment of the loss of his friend Bassanio through marriage.' (p. 146).

¹⁰ For the issue of mirroring or specular games in Shakespeare, see Lawrence Flores Pereira's thesis on Shakespeare (**Hamlet** and **Kind Lear**), named **De Shakespeare a Racine: o engano especular e outros temas**. (Tese de Doutorado). Porto Alegre: PUC-RS, 2000. In this thesis he presents the specular allurements as something similar to the mirroring device.

Psychoanalytic terms, is foreclosed from Antonio's inwardness, from the play and even from Venice.

In that sense, Drakakis presents an interesting detail about this: 'Shylock is part of Venice's own unconscious that it can only deal with either by repression, or by transformation into what we might call the Christian imaginary – that set of images and institutions in and through which Venice recognises its own cultural identity.' (1998, p. 200). Drakakis parts from Freud's idea of the 'killing of the primal father', in his *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1938). Thus, the Venetians project on Shylock his inward feelings, his resentment, anger and fear.

In fact, Shakespeare foresees *avant la lettre* the Psychoanalytic notion of foreclosure in his play. There are three apparent hypothetical causes of Antonio's sadness in the play: (1) the anxiety of losing his wealth in the sea, which is denied by him from the very beginning of the play; (2) his love for Bassanio, which is once again denied with his denegation – Fie! Fie!, though the text suggests that they have an ambiguous relationship, homoerotic or they are perhaps sort of relatives – 'kinsman'; (3) there are feelings whose cause are occluded and foreclosed in his inwardness: his anxiety towards the paternal figure. As we have seen, Shylock is defined as the *ur-father* of the play and of all Christianity by Adelman, just as Norman Holland sees that Shylock is 'a symbol for the vengeful father-God' (1966, p. 234). In fact, the cause of Antonio's melancholy is his anxiety towards the representation of the paternal figure re-imagined in Shylock. For Norman Holland, 'the sad Antonio [...] is subjected, as if by a father who hates him, to hostility, risk, danger – no wonder he is melancholy.' (1966, p. 237).

Furthermore, there are other significant details in the play which demonstrate such evidence. Shylock reports that Antonio kicked, spurned him and spat his gabardine without any apparent reason. This fact is significant to

understand the occluded reason of Antonio's aggression to Shylock, because Antonio could simply affirm that he hates Shylock because he is a Jew as the other characters in the play affirm. However, such gesture points to something more intimate of Antonio's feelings and of what Shylock may evoke to him. Alternatively, Antonio willingly accepts Shylock's bond, which demands a pound of flesh to be 'cut off'. In the trial scene, it is evident that his feelings are dominated by his inner desire and fear of castration.¹¹ Therefore, ambivalently, as he faces Shylock, first he affronts him and then he willingly accepts the 'merry bond', whose implicit meaning threatens and haunts him with the promise of castration. His desire of castration also appears in the beginning of the play, with his desire of being opened up to Bassanio: 'my purse, my person lie all *unlocked* to your occasions', says Antonio to Bassanio. Likewise, his anxiety of castration is enhanced when he states resignedly in the trial scene that he is a 'tainted wether' – a weak castrated ram. Antonio's sadness is due to the foreclosure of the cause of his anxiety, the anxiety against the paternal figure. However, Antonio never mentions anything about his anxiety to the paternal figure. Nevertheless, Shakespeare suggests that the paternal figure may be the cause of his anxiety throughout the play. The mirroring device helps us to see that Antonio's sadness is doubled in other characters' speech in the play.

Antonio's sadness is due to his anxiety foreclosed in the play and in his inwardness. However, the configuration of foreclosure in Antonio's inwardness seems still quite schematic in the play. The way Shakespeare represented Antonio's awkward relationship to Shylock and his ambivalent reaction to him suggests that Shakespeare perceived intuitively something in human inwardness which will be called, in modern Psychoanalysis, foreclosure. Lacan builds up the concept of foreclosure from Freud's analysis of *Verneigung*.¹²

¹¹ See Adelman's book **Blood relations**, in which she states that in Shylock enables Antonio's masochistic desire and fear of castration, which is symbolically represented in Shylock's gesture of circumcision.

¹² Lacan discusses foreclosure parting from Hyppolite's commentary of Freud's essay on

According to Laplanche and Pontalis, it is a specific mechanism which constitutes a 'primordial rejection of a fundamental "signifier" (such as the phallus as a signifier of the complex of castration) outside the symbolic universe of the subject' (2000, p. 195). It is a mechanism different from repression, due to two main traits: '(1) The foreclosed signifiers are not integrated in the unconscious of the subject; (2) they do not return 'from the inside', but from the real, especially in the hallucinatory phenomenon.' (2000, p. 195). The threatening signifier, the law, the menace of castration does not come from inside, but from the outside, in a figure whose menacing act is promised in his bond: 'a pound of flesh to be cut off.' Shakespeare figured out, at least intuitively, that there were some feelings which determined people's attitudes, although the causes of such feelings were unexplainable, were only suggested in one's actions, attitudes and speeches. Thus, the notion of foreclosure is represented through a constellation of motifs in the play. Such constellation of feelings is mirrored in other characters feelings and gestures.

There are at least three characters in the play that mirror Antonio's sadness. And all their feelings, anxieties and sadness are provoked the paternal figure's deeds. Portia reveals in her first speech that she is sad and weary probably because the choice of her husband is determined by her father's will. Thus, a mirror of Antonio's sadness and inward feelings is seen in Portia's relation to her paternal figure. Her desire is not to fulfill her father's will is suggested in her first speech and, in fact, she cheats her father's will in casket choice demanding someone to sing a song while Bassanio make his choice. Such song reveals which is the real casket, by the rhyme *bred, head* = lead casket.

Antonio's inwardness is also mirrored in Lancelot's comic deliberation about his leaving his master Shylock. Launcelot feels conscience, indecision and

Verneinung in Lacan's **Escritos** (pp.893-902) and defines foreclosure in his commentary of Hyppolite's speech, pp. 370-401).

fear because he is going to leave Shylock's house. It is odd that he feels anxiety, conscience and fear to leave his master Shylock; however, he does not feel such anxieties to his real father, old Gobbo. He substitutes his real father for Shylock, the ur-father of the play. His anxiety is enhanced and doubled the Esau and Jacob plot re-imagined with his father. In that moment, he needs the blessing of his biological father to leave the symbolic father. Most strangely, though he willingly feels desire to cheat his real father, old Gobbo, who is blind, he feels guilty of leaving Shylock to serve Bassanio. Though Launcelot is a comic figure, he is the one who consciously displaces his father's symbolic power to Shylock. He substitutes his paternal figure for Shylock, projecting on him fear and anxiety. Antonio also substitutes unconsciously his fear and anxiety towards the paternal figure on Shylock.

Another mirror of Antonio's sadness is shown in Jessica's fear, anxiety and shame for eloping from her father's house. Jessica feels unhappiness and tediousness due to the repressing acts of paternal figure. She states that her house is a 'hell' and thus she wants to run and 'end this strife', as we will see later on. Her feelings work as a specular device mirroring and echoing Antonio's sadness, weariness and unhappiness, whose cause is the anxiety towards the paternal figure.

Therefore, the cause of his anxiety towards his paternal figure is mirrored and doubled in the other characters' inward feelings, emotions and anxieties in the play: on the one hand, Antonio's sadness is presented as having no cause in his first speech; on the other hand, Portia's, Launcelot's and Jessica's sadness, fear, conscience and unhappiness are caused by the paternal presence in the play. If Portia's weariness, Jessica's unhappiness and tediousness, and Lancelot's conscience and fear are due to the anxiety towards the paternal figure, contiguously Antonio's sadness and weariness, by this mirroring device, is likewise caused by his anxiety towards the paternal figure re-imagined in Shylock. What is foreclosed in Antonio's inwardness is doubled in three other

characters of the play. Shakespeare constructs the mimetic device to represent foreclosed feelings associating different effects to one cause: the anxieties to the paternal figure.

Therefore, Antonio's relation to his paternal figure, re-imagined in Shylock, is seen in his hatred to him. Antonio's paternal figure is absent in the play. His unexplained anger to Shylock touches on the primitive anger to the father. Holland states that Portia and Antonio make a couple who symbolizes the incarnation of the oedipal or phallic stratum which is shared by every child: the loving mother, Portia, who protects and saves Antonio from his castrating father, Shylock. (1966, p. 237). Also, his masochistic desire and fear of castration, which can be potentially accomplished by Shylock, enhance his anxiety towards the paternal figure. He accepts the idea of castration, though it causes anxiety. However, the cause of such anxiety is constantly denied by Antonio, which signals the inward dimensions foreclosed from Antonio's inwardness and from the play. Therefore, the other characters play the role of correlative figures of Antonio, mirroring similar feelings felt by him. As is going to be discussed below, Portia's, Launcelot' and Jessica's anxieties and sadness are provoked by the presence of the paternal figure.

5 FINAL REMARKS

Furthermore, the Shakespearean mirroring device suggests that Shakespeare probably perceived intuitively and represented foreclosure in the play. He represented some awkward obscure dimensions of the characters of the play, especially Antonio and Portia, dimensions which are not perceived by them. For instance, Antonio's ambivalent relationship to Shylock, a relationship signaled both in his hatred and in his submissive acceptance of his bond, hides in the lines the ever-denied and foreclosed anxiety towards the cause of his sadness and discontent: the anxiety regarding the paternal figure re-imagined

in Shylock. Such idea of the foreclosed cause Antonio's anxiety in his inwardness also can be only seen mirrored in the other characters' anxieties in the play: Jessica's unhappiness and tediousness, Launcelot's conscience to the Jew his master, Portia's anxiety regarding the casket test are all anxieties whose cause lay in the paternal figure, epitomized in Shylock, the *ur-father*, the primordial father of the play, according to Adelman (2008, p. 131). The other characters' anxiety is clearly doubled by the most comic and seemingly secondary character in the play, Launcelot. In II, ii, Launcelot strangely drives the anxiety from the biological father to Shylock: instead of feeling his conscience when he cheats and mocks his blind father, Gobbo, he feels his conscience and anxiety when he desires to leave Shylock's house. If Jessica's, Portia's and Launcelot's uneasiness in the play is caused by the paternal figure, contiguously Antonio's sadness and discontent is due to the absent presence of the paternal figure in the play, projected onto Shylock, though foreclosed from his inwardness and from the play. Shakespeare perceived at least in a subtler level the obscure dimensions of the unconscious acting on the self's attitudes, dimensions whose causes are quite effaced from the self's consciousness, which Lacan's Psychoanalysis names foreclosure. Shakespeare intuitively perceived something occluded and denied in human behavior which will be important to Psychoanalysis. The suggested foreclosed cause of Antonio's inwardness is a technique to represent his inward anxieties, insinuated in his sadness and weariness in the play.

Moreover, in the case of *The Merchant of Venice*, bodily traits such as weariness, sadness, tediousness and discontent are symptomatic of psychic traits incrustated in the inner-self, which come out in moments of tension, especially for Antonio, Bassanio, Portia, Shylock and Antonio. Therefore, there are explicit contents and, beyond them, suggestions which have to be read between the lines of the words and sentences, in the constellations of gestures, repetitions, strange details, dissonances, verbal slips, silences and pathos. That is how Shakespeare constructed his mimesis of inwardness in the play.

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