LANCELOT AND SHYLOCK:
CONSCIENCE AND ANXIETY REGARDING THE PATERNAL FIGURE

LANCELOT E SHYLOCK:
CONSCIÊNCIA E ANSIEDADE EM RELAÇÃO À FIGURA PATERNA

Carlos Roberto Ludwig[1]

Abstract: This article analyzes Lancelot's comic deliberation about leaving his master Shylock, in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Lancelot's relationship with his father Gobbo and Shylock is ambiguous, as he feels anxiety about leaving Shylock's home, but feels no anxiety about deceiving his father. Analysis suggests that he reverses the role of the father figure, taking Shylock rather than Gobbo as the father figure representation. Likewise, there are other characters in the play who project onto Shylock the representation of the father figure, mirroring anger, resentment, fear and anxiety.

Keywords: Inwardness, Conscience, Anxiety, The merchant of Venice.

Resumo: Este artigo analisa a deliberação cômica de Lancelot sobre deixar seu mestre Shylock, na peça *The Merchant of Venice*, de Shakespeare. O relacionamento de Lancelot com seu pai Gobbo e Shylock é ambíguo, uma vez que ele sente ansiedade em deixar a casa de Shylock, mas não sente ansiedade ao enganar seu pai. A análise sugere que ele inverte o papel da figura paterna, tomando Shylock em vez de Gobbo como a representação da figura paterna. Da mesma forma, há outros personagens na peça que projetam em Shylock a representação da figura paterna, espelhando raiva, ressentimento, medo e ansiedade.

Palavras-Chave: Interioridade, Consciência, Ansiedade, O Mercador de Veneza.

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. However, inwardness was a Renaissance issue emerging from previous forms of the representation of an inner-self in other literary forms. On the other hand, 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

---

[1] Docente e coordenador do Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal do Tocantins, *campus* de Porto Nacional. E-mail: carlosletras@uft.edu.br. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6846-5774

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.

This article discusses Lancelot's comic scene when he is leaving his master Shylock. Thus, it is possible to observe his inner feelings that emerge in his speech. Lancelot's relationship with his father Gobbo and Shylock is ambiguous, as he feels anxiety about leaving Shylock's home, but does not feel anxiety about betraying his father. On the contrary, he mocks his father and deceives him. He reverses the role of the father figure, taking Shylock instead of Gobbo as the father figure representation, as his anxiety arises when he thinks of running away from Shylock. Gobbo must be the character that represents Lancelot's symbolic paternal presence; instead, he projects such feelings onto Shylock: strangely, such a powerful influence is not felt when he sees Gobbo, his biological father, but only when he wishes to leave Shylock. Likewise, there are other characters in the play who may replace Shylock with his father figure, projecting onto him anger, hatred, resentment, fear, and anxiety. Such a twist suggests the play's ambiguity regarding the representation of the paternal figure, epitomized in Shylock as the play's primordial father, or *ur*-father (ADELMAN, 2008).

1 Inwardness in Early Renaissance

Inwardness is an inward 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. Inwardness is, therefore, the inward dispositions of the self wherein thoughts, feelings, ideas, and anxieties are floating and incrusted 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. 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 may be merely the illusion of totality of the self.

The 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),[2] the inward and outward sadness, inward and outward cleanness, inward and outward regret, inward and outward veneration.[3] Likewise, beforehand

---

[2] For more details about these discourses, see Maus's *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (1995).

[3] 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

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 questioned by polemicists of the age, thus it is possible to infer that they were common-places in the discourses of that time.

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 polemists 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. However, 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

---

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).

conjecturing of what this person might be thinking and feeling. Maus (1995) 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. Nevertheless, 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 polemists 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 polemists and writers created evasive arguments to demonstrate their concern. Thus, Maus (1995) 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 (1995) 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 (1995) concentrates her analysis on the historical and cultural arguments. She does not take into account 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 concepts and the Renaissance concerns about inwardness. Thus, there is no determined set of constellations which defines inwardness in an age, even though they may appear together.

2 Conscience and Anxiety regarding the paternal figure

In *The merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare introduces Launcelot's wondering whether he will leave Shylock's house. Launcelot is presented as a comic character, whose speeches are full of language mistakes, blunders and formal uses of language. He is a comic and burlesque servant to Shylock. His name was taken from mediaeval romance *The Grail Quest.* Shakespeare's Launcelot may be taken from the Lancelot of the Round Table in the romance *The Grail Quest*, an anonymous text from the 13th century. It is a romance in which Galaaz is the saint man, and Lancelot is the 'sinner' who has an affair with Guinevere. In his debate with his conscience, Launcelot echoes the opposition of the saint man and the sinner.

Although leaving Shylock is a good releasing action for him, he feels that the devil (the fiend) is tempting him to fly away. Launcelot starts the scene exposing his inward doubt and hesitation to run away from Shylock's house:

> Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me saying to me 'Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,' or 'good Gobbo,' or good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away. My conscience says 'No; take heed,' honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo, or, as aforesaid, 'honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels.' Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: 'Fia!' says the fiend; 'away!' says the fiend; 'for the heavens, rouse up a brave mind,' says the fiend, 'and run.' Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me 'My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man's son,' or rather an honest woman's son; for, indeed, my father did something smack, something grow to, he had a kind of taste; well, my conscience says 'Launcelot, budge not.' 'Budge,' says the fiend. 'Budge not,' says my conscience. 'Conscience,' say I, 'you counsel well;' ' Fiend,' say I, 'you counsel well:' to be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation; and, in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend; my heels are at your command; I will run. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 47)

Launcelot says that he will use his conscience to run away from Shylock. However, his conscience advises him not to run away, because thereby he may lose his soul. The sides of his conscience – the evil and the good ones – depict Launcelot's moral scruples. He lingers in such a debate and then states that his conscience is just his good dimension in his mind. However, if he keeps on being ruled by his conscience he will not run away from Shylock. At last, he defines his conscience as a hard one and thinks that the fiend gives him better advice than his conscience. His actions are indecisive due to those extremes wherein his decision lingers. His inward dispositions seem to be controlled by mysterious forces, which pervade his mind (McGINN, 2007, p. 12). As it is noticed, Shakespeare represents inwardness, which is interfered by conscience and mysterious forces of the self.

Coupled with that, he wants to embody a new religion, changing from Judaism to Catholicism. That was something quite revolting to English Puritans, which condemned both religions, just as they condemned religious changes. There would be a sense of disorder or even uproar implicit in Launcelot's reaction of leaving the Jew and becoming a Catholic. It necessary to bear in mind that, after a long time of religious changes, the idea of adopting Roman Catholicism was disquieting to the audience, especially in Shakespeare's age. It is worth remembering that the Christians in the play are Roman Catholic Christians. Moreover, England adopted a Protestant Church with its ups and downs during the 16th century.[4] Thus, the history of abrupt changes of the Church in England could cause anxiety and suspicion in Launcelot's debate. Such feelings were awakened whenever one would undertake religious conversion.

This sort of floatation between the 'good conscience' and the 'bad conscience' is a late representation of distinct figures from the *morality plays*. Besides the influences of the Latin tradition, such as Seneca's, Ovidius' and Plutarch's influence, Shakespeare was strongly influenced by the popular tradition of the Middle Ages. Such popular theatrical tradition was constituted mainly by the *Mysteries* and *Moralities plays*. The *Mysteries* or *Miracle plays* were playlets that presented the history of the universe from the very beginning of the creation until the Judgement Day. These representations aimed at teaching the people stories from the Bible, as Cain and Abel, the Deluge, and the Death of Jesus Christ and so forth.

Whereas the *Mysteries plays* taught the biblical history of the universe and the creation

---

[4] First, under Henry VIII's kingdom, he broke with the Roman Church and changed it to what he called it the Church of England, or the Henrician English Church; after that, his son, Edward IV, adopted rather radical and strict attitudes towards a more Puritan and Protestant Church; later on, Mary Stuart temporarily re-established the Roman Catholic Church; and at last Elizabeth I re-established her father's church in a more tolerant face of the Anglican Church.

of the world and man, the *Moralities plays* represented the conflicts of the soul of the individual. According to Greenblatt (2004), the Morality plays were

> secular sermons designed to show the terrible consequences of disobedience, idleness, or dissipation. Typically, a character – an embodied abstraction with a name like Mankind or Youth – turns away from a proper guide such as Honest Recreation or Virtuous Life and begins to spend his time with Ignorance, All-for-Money, or Riot. (2004, p. 31)

According to Greenblatt, Shakespeare probably watched some of these plays, such as the *Interlude of Youth*, represented in Stratford-upon-Avon around 1569. Such plays were rehearsed and presented by the guilds, which were associations of craftsmen and workers. They met to represent such plays in the festivals of May, Christmas and Twelfth Night. In Shakespeare's work, there are still some traits of such plays, such as the Grave-digger scene and the actors' scenes in *Hamlet* and the entire rehearsing of a play inside *A midsummer night's dream,* all of them very comic and burlesque. However, Shakespeare melts in one character what were two or more different characters in the morality plays. In Launcelot, we see the good and bad conscience working together in the same mind, still in a very schematic way, however. In such plays, the conflicts of the soul were staged in order to discuss human destine after death, so that they could morally teach what people should do and what principles they were obliged to follow to go to Heaven.

Not far from Shakespeare's work, Marlowe still had some of these mediaeval traits in his *Doctor Faustus*, for instance, written around 1588-9. In that play, the good angel and the evil angel fight to persuade Faustus' mind. Other abstract figures are still represented in different characters, such as *Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth*, and *Lechery*. The Seven Deadly Sins are also represented in real characters. In Shakespeare this does not appear like that: all those same abstract concepts are melted in one character, such as Launcelot. However, in Launcelot there is a sort of ontological demonstration of how Shakespeare reshaped those distinct figures from the *Miracle* and *Morality* plays in one character.

Counterpoised to this, inward representation of feelings in Morality plays was quite flat and predictable. Their inner self was constituted by a predetermined psychology, which put side by side good characters and good attitudes, bad characters and bad attitudes. There were no further expectations, surprise or even complexity of the characters. In Marlowe flat characters are noticeable, as in *Doctor Faustus*. Alternatively, Launcelot is already a sort of

melting-pot of the soul, the good and bad conscience.[5] Nonetheless, other characters are very complex and enigmatic, such as Portia, Antonio and Shylock. Thus, Shakespeare overcame his contemporary playwrights creating rather complex characters whose inwardness is represented with its enigmatic and obscure dimensions.

Thus, Launcelot's first speech presents a rough representation of inwardness. It is an intermediary result of the early representation of the soul and the late complex characters in Shakespeare such as Brutus, Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear. When Launcelot fights against the bad side of his conscience, he is not just opposing an abstract representation of the bad dimensions of the soul. In fact, he fights against something deeper in his inwardness: his conscience. Thus, conscience is an essential element to the determination of inwardness in the play. In a deeper level of his inwardness there are incrusted elements of social, cultural, and theological constructs which determine it. They were imposed on the individual's mind by the ideas of order, a very common-place in early Modern England. For example, in *Julius Caesar*, it is clear how conscience works:

> Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma or a hideous dream. (SHAKESPEARE, 1976, p. 32).

Brutus uses the term *phantasma* which is a word used by psychoanalysis nowadays. That is exactly what Launcelot is fighting against: his own phantasmas, which appear in his inwardness and blur his judgement. Conscience is an essential issue which constantly interferes in feelings, thoughts and actions of the characters of the play. Inwardness is therefore pervaded by the conscience of the self. Shakespeare intuitively perceived such traits of inwardness and portrayed them in the drama.

Thus, conscience is a meaningful issue in moral, theological and even philosophical dimensions in Shakespeare's plays and in Elizabethan Age. Conscience and action are two sides which demonstrate deep ambiguities and complexities of the characters' inwardness. Such complexities are presented through paradoxes caused by feelings, ideas and thoughts.

In that sense, Stephen L. Collins (1989) states that conscience in Elizabethan era was determined by the ideas of order and correspondences of macrocosm and microcosm. The

---

[5] Another source helps us to understand the configuration of Launcelot's conscience. In 1584 Robert Wilson published a play called **Three Ladies of London**. In the play, Lucre, Usury, Dissimulation, Simony are opposed to Simplicity, Honesty, Hospitality and Conscience. For Janet Adelman this play is the most influent source of the play. See Adelman's book Blood Relations, 2008.

political order was extremely coercive and its moral principles were an efficient way to constrain the individual to act according to the patterns of determining monarchic and theological hierarchies. Any attempt of non-cooperation with the state could lead someone to frustration and ostracism. Thinkers of Tudor age such as Thomas Elyot, Francis Walsingham and Thomas Cranmer were quite concerned with the maintenance of social and political order of the kingdom. Thus, they molded a thought system based on mediaeval assumptions, which were normally preached in the Homilies at church. As a result, the public domain was put on the first ground in order to control the private domain. The inner-self was determined by the coercive and political structure which needed the strongest repression of self-expression and social disorder.

The ideas of order operated not only in the political level, but they were over-determining structures of individual conscience and inwardness. The idea of order was so strong in people's conscience that it was even transposed to the description of the soul. As Collins describes,

> Because the world was naturally ordered, the individual soul was correspondingly ordered. A virtuous soul was an ordered soul; a corrupt soul was disordered or diseased. In this way Tudor psychology understood that disorderly behavior in an individual was a perversion of what was natural and good just as a disordered society was a perversion of an ordered society. Disorder was unnatural. It was merely a negation of what was good and natural and had no definable existence of its own. Intemperance and confusion, Robert Mason explained, was reason engraved with lust and concupiscence. (1989, p. 23-24)

Thus, virtue, temperance and moderation were ordering ideals of the individual behavior. His action and conduct unveiled his virtue or corruption, since it was preached that virtue oriented correct behavior, whereas a disordering behavior was determined by vice and moral corruption (1989, p. 24). Here are some over-determining elements of conscience which influenced many dimensions of the inner-self. Thus, such a system, in its attempt to restrain disordering situations, was extremely super-egoical. They produced insecurity just as insatisfaction which obliged the system to create ways of circumscribing the action of the individual in the patterns of order expected in that age.

Another aspect of the idea of order in the Elizabethan age was that the common-places and Tudor and Elizabethan ethics had their ground on the conciliation of will and reason (1989, p. 24). For Collins, there was a psychological division of the body in three areas,

the highest being the seat of reason which directed human action. Undirected will lead to disorder and chaos order and degree, the prerequisites for a public weal, revealed God's disposal of the "influence of understanding". Good counsel, that ubiquitous Tudor commonplace was right, good and honest. (1989, p. 25)

Once again, reason was considered right when it could motivate a reasonable behavior just as it was considered good and right if led by reason and never by passions and individual interests. Collins establishes an analogy between Tudor psychology and modern psychology: 'In modern terminology, Tudor social psychology was superego-oriented. The individual ego and id were restricted. The more the ego restrained the id, the more it resembled the superego and the more it appropriated 'right reason' as its own venue'. (1989, p. 25). The sense of duty was circumscribed by the thoughtless obedience of the individual, who defined himself based on an outside model and not from cognitive and logical self-reflection. Thus, it is evident how elements from the ideas of order in Tudor and Elizabethan age were essential to the policy of the kingdom with the purpose of determining conscience. Moreover, the importance of the 'decent' behavior was extremely highlighted by Tudor theorists, so that the passions and desires of the individual were constantly denied and denigrated. Even introspection was not seen as a way of getting good behavior. As a result, the idea of change was always reproached and the idea of cycle was appropriate to Tudor policy.

Historical and political changes were only possible when strictly linked to psychological changes and to the perception of the self. If the coercive policy of the ideas of order could not restrain psychological changes in that age, then social, historical and political changes had great impact on the psychology of the period, enlarging the consciousness of the reality wherein people lived. Thus, Shakespeare's characters embody the spirit of deep psychological changes; they could not adapt themselves to thought structures focused on the order of the world, but they search in themselves for changing their thought and behavior. The refusal of common patterns of action in Shakespeare, in exchange of actions leading to complexity, ambiguity, and depth, reveal a turning point to the changes and ambiguities of the character which is already rather self-centred in Shakespeare's work. That is the reaction and an attitude to exploit subtler and deeper dimensions of characters' inwardness in a world already in crisis. Therefore, Shakespeare used psychological changes in the age to represent inwardness through complexity, ambiguity and depth.

Launcelot's debate with his conscience consists of a theatrical representation of inner workings of the individual's conscience. In this representation of conscience, once again

Shakespeare uses the opposition of *theatricality* and *textuality*, proposed by Moisan (1987), in *Shakespeare reproduced* (1987). The theatrical traits are enhanced in Launcelot and his father. They are clowns, burlesque and comic, and such traits veil essential elements reproduced elsewhere in the play, such as the case of conscience. The theatricality of the tragicomedy hides meanings which are important elsewhere in the play. Such element is not necessarily visible in other characters, but it is essential since it determines and reveals their judgement and inwardness. In the play, conscience is something apparently absent. However, it pervades many characters' decisions, acts, attitudes and gestures. For example, Jessica's spasms during her elopement are influenced by her conscience and shame. She first feels ashamed of being dressed as a boy and then runs away from her father's house. Portia's judgement in the trial scene is determined by conscience, and her decision of applying a rather strict and inflexible justice is pervaded by her conscience, which comes out in her lingering to take the final verdict. Conscience is therefore a rather determining dimension of the characters' inwardness, because it reveals incrusted traits rooted in their inner-self, and it is a psychological dimension used by Shakespeare to represent inwardness in the play.

After Launcelot's comic speech, he meets his father Gobbo who is blind. He brings a *dish of doves* to give to Launcelot's master. He asks where Shylock's house is, but Launcelot jokingly deceives him. He cheats his father affirming that his son is dead. He wants to mock his father and after that he reveals that he is his son; he kneels, and asks twice his father's blessing. They recognize each other as father and son, as Launcelot says that his mother is Margery, Gobbo's wife:

> Her name is Margery, indeed: I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood. Lord worshipped might he be! what a beard hast thou got! thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my fill-horse has on his tail. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 51).

When Gobbo notices that Launcelot has beard on his face, his words echo the biblical passage when Jacob cheats Esau by buying his primogeniture with a pot of meat. The 'dish of doves' Gobbo brings to give Shylock replaces Jacob's pot of meat. In the *King James' Bible* (*Genesis*, 25, 29-34)[6], Jacob becomes the first ascendant of Christ lineage. Thus, Launcelot re-

---

[6] And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he {was} faint: / And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red {pottage}; for I {am} faint: therefore was his name called Edom. {with...: Heb. with that red, with that red pottage} {Edom: that is Red} / And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. / And Esau said, Behold, I {am} at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? {at...: Heb. going to die} / And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he

imagines the story of Jacob, the cheating of the father. However, what is symbolically displaced here is not primogeniture, but the anxiety Launcelot feels regarding Shylock: instead of feeling fear and conscience towards his biological father, he feels conscience as he conjectures to leave Shylock's house. The representation of Launcelot's paternal figure is re-imagined in Shylock, not in Gobbo. This comic representation of biblical events is evoked elsewhere in the play: Portia wants to cheat her father and outwit her father's will; Jessica elopes and cheats her father, steals his ducats and jewels.

This detail is enhanced by another detail in his speech, when he explains the way to Shylock's house: 'Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left; marry, at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.' (SHAKESPEARE, 2010, p. 50). According to Adelman (2008), this speech signals the conversion to Christianity. The Latin translation to *turn* is *vertere*, which is the root of *converting*. He comically echoes here the conversions of Judaism to Christianity, according to Adelman. Adelman (2008) points out that Launcelot's anxiety and guilt of leaving Shylock, as well as his deceiving his blind father Gobbo work as an imaginary fantasy of such biblical story. She enhances conflicts between paternal figures (Shylock and Gobbo) and the filial figure (Launcelot). Launcelot needs then his father's blessing to convert to Christianity. According to Adelman, this reading is possible, since Shakespeare introduces in this comic passage in the biblical story in the play.

In Lancelot's comic deliberation about leaving his master Shylock it is worth noticing his inward feelings coming out. Lancelot's relationship to his father Gobbo and Shylock is ambiguous, since he feels anxiety of leaving Shylock's house, but he does not feel anxiety in cheating his father. On the contrary, he mocks his father and cheats him. He changes the role of the paternal figure and takes Shylock as the phantasmatic representation of paternal figure, because his anxiety pops up when he thinks to run away from Shylock. Gobbo should be the character who represents Launcelot's symbolic paternal presence; instead he projects such feelings onto Shylock: oddly, such powerful influence is not felt when he sees Gobbo, his biological father, but only when he desires to leave Shylock. Likewise, there are other characters in the play who substitute their paternal figure for Shylock, projecting on him anger, hatred, resentment, fear, and anxiety. Such twisting suggests the ambiguity of the play towards

---

sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. / Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles [meat]; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised {his} birthright. / Genesis, chapter 25, 29-34)

the representation of the paternal figure, epitomized in Shylock as the primordial father of the play.

If Lancelot feels his anxiety for the father figure in Shylock, who represents his biological father's surrogate; likewise, Antonio's relationship to his father figure may be projected onto Shylock, as well as his anxiety, which is seen in his hatred of the Jew. Antonio's weariness and sadness may be mirrored in the other characters Portia, Jessica and Lancelot. Consequently, his anxieties are caused by the presence of a representation of a father figure in the play. Shakespeare represents inner feelings through the mirroring device, which suggests one's feelings in the other's behavior. Therefore, Lancelot's impulse of his anxiety about the father figure for Shylock is an indication of the cause of Antonio's anxiety, who re-imagines in Shylock the representation of the father figure.

References

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

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

FREUD, Sigmund. *Obras completas.* Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 2006.

GREENBLATT, Stephen. *Will in the world:* how Shakespeare became Shakespeare. New York: Norton & Company, 2004.

HONAN, Park. *Shakespeare:* uma vida. 2. reimp. Tradução Sonia Moreira. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001.

KING JAMES. *The Holy Bible*, 1611, available in http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/King-James-Version-KJV-Bible/. Accessed: 14/07/2021.

LACAN, J. *Escritos.* Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1998.

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. *Hamlet*. Edited by Harold Jenkins. London: Arden, 1997.

SHAKESPEARE, William. *Julius Caesar.* Edited by Norman Sanders. London: Penguin, 1976.

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

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

SHAKESPEARE, William. *The merchant of Venice*. Edited by Lindlay Kaplan & David Bevington. In: KAPLAN, M. Lindsay & BEVINGTON, David (eds.). *The merchant of Venice: texts and contexts.* New York: Palgrave, 2002