# Homoerotic and fiscal fantasies in Antonio's inwardness: fear and desire of castration

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**Abstract:** This research discusses the strange relationship between Antonio and Bassanio, as well as the merchant's relationship with Shylock. Their relationship is represented as homoerotic, and Antonio's desire for an inexplicable sacrifice for Bassanio suggests aspects of Antonio's interiority. Shylock is also represented as the play's overriding father, and this detail suggests the cause of Antonio's sadness at the beginning of the play. The concept of interiority is discussed by Maus (1995) as a social and cultural construct of the English Renaissance. She analyses interiority based on the opposition between appearances, considered false and misleading at the time, and interiority, which was seen as sincere and true manifestations of the inner dimensions of the individual.

**Keywords:** Interiority. Homoerotic relations. Subjectivity. Shakespeare. *The merchant of Venice*.

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## Introduction

This research focuses on the awkward relationship between Antonio and Bassanio, as well as their relationship with Shylock. Their relationship is depicted as homoerotic, and Antonio's desire for a frivolous sacrifice for Bassanio suggests Antonio's inwardness. Shylock is also depicted as the primordial father of the play, and such detail hints at the cause of Antonio's sadness at the beginning of the play.

Maus (1995) presents inwardness as a social and cultural construct of the English Renaissance. She analyses inwardness based on the opposition between appearances, considered false and deceitful in the age, and inwardness, which is taken as true and sincere manifestations of the inward dimensions of the self. However, McGinn goes beyond Maus' discussion on inwardness, perceiving that Shakespeare represented the uncontrolled obscure inward dimensions of the self. He presents the *mysterious forces* which control the characters' inward dispositions.

Moreover, the discussion aims at analysing the constellation of motifs and the rhetoric of inwardness which represent inward feelings in Shakespeare's play. Shakespearean mimesis of inwardness is represented in subtle signs such as silences, non-said, breaks in language, bodily gestures, pathos, contradictions in ideas and thoughts, conscience, shame, and verbal slips. Furthermore, Shakespeare's mimesis of inwardness is constructed through the mirroring device, which represents a character's inward dimensions and dispositions of the mind in other character's feelings, ideas, thoughts, gestures, behaviour and attitude. Actually, Shakespeare did not invent inwardness, but he deepened the representation of inwardness, introducing innovative traits in language in the drama.

## Antonio's ambiguous relations towards Bassanio and Shylock

Antonio's sadness has also been interpreted as his homoerotic feelings to Bassanio. When Antonio denies that his sadness is due to his fortune in the sea, Salerio jokes by saying, "Why, then you are in love" (Shakespeare, 1992, p. 9). Antonio's denegation "Fie, Fie" suggests a passionate state. Some critics point out that this may be the cause of Antonio's sadness, such as Adelman (2008), Patterson (1999), and O'Rourke (2003). As Bassanio and Antonio begin their first conversation, their intimate relationship is evident. Knowing Bassanio is interested in wooing a lady, Antonio may feel sad.

Antonio asks Bassanio about his "secret pilgrimage": "Well, tell me now what lady is the same / To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage, / That you to-day promised to tell me of?" (Shakespeare, 1992, p. 15). It is strange that Antonio uses "secret pilgrimage" to describe Bassanio's undertaking to Belmont. Drakakis (2010, p. 182) suggests that such usage means Bassanio's adventure is "quasi-religious". Shakespeare makes a twist in the meaning of this word to represent Bassanio's deeper desires. This twist embodies a religious meaning as a way of idealising and obscuring his *real* desire, which is to marry Portia to get her fortune. This idealisation is an excuse to justify his desire in religious terms. For these quasi-religious reasons, he deludes himself, Antonio and some in the audience about his innermost intentions. This twist covers his inner feelings with idealistic and metaphysical reasons.


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However, Bassanio delays his answer by confessing to Antonio that he has been a prodigal gentleman who has spent everything and saved nothing so far. Bassanio demands Antonio to be bound in a sort of money-lending contract:

> *'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,*
> *How much I have disabled mine estate,*
> *By something showing a more swelling port*
> *Than my faint means would grant continuance:*
> *Nor do I now make moan to be abridged*
> *From such a noble rate; but my chief care*
> *Is to come fairly off from the great debts*
> *Wherein my time something too prodigal*
> *Hath left me gauged. To you, Antonio,*
> *I owe the most, in money and in love,*
> *And from your love I have a warranty*
> *To unburden all my plots and purposes*
> *How to get clear of all the debts I owe.*
> (Shakespeare, 1992, p. 15)

It is evident that Bassanio is a bankrupt who depends on Antonio's favour. Because of that, the audience could see Bassanio as a waster, a thriftless man, and even an idler, who was, of course, an anti-model of the new mercantilist man. For Max Weber (2004), the Calvinistic Protestant ethics preached that working and saving money were sort of religious virtues and that a thriftless man would be damned for misfortune, dishonour and disgrace by God if he made no effort to achieve those moral virtues. Thriftiness, investing and accumulating money were seen as blessings in a Puritan society; face to that, Bassanio's image would be reproved as dissipater and prodigal by some Puritans in the Elizabethan audience. According to Max Weber (2004), Calvinism started to influence Anglicanism in the late 16th and 17th centuries.

Coupled with that, Venice in the late 16th century was already a city in decadence. That happened because the world's commerce moved from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. Because of that, Venice had to face many social and financial problems, such as poverty, bankruptcy, food scarcity, famine, and penury. There was a huge quantity of poor people, beggars, vagabonds, bankrupts, drunkards, and prostitutes on the streets (Kaplan, 2002). Thus, the representation of Venice was rather decadent in the view of English travellers, storytellers, reporters, writers, and moralists. Bassanio's bankruptcy was not strange at all to the Elizabethan audience. Many people probably knew some details from reports and merchants' stories (Kaplan, 2002). Bassanio seems to be a character who desperately tries to gain fortune through marriage since he acknowledges that this is the second time he is a hazard to get a fortune.

Furthermore, Bassanio's declaration, "I owe the most, in money and love," unveils Bassanio's feelings, intentions, and desire. He mentions first "money", and the second term is love, which locates feelings and affections in an inferior position to money. The connection between money, wealth, and affection and feelings is established for the first time in Bassanio's speech. Drakakis (2010, p. 182) observes that this is the first of many connection between *money* and *love*, which introduces a range of fiscal and affective connections in the play. Later on, Bassanio describes Portia's beauty in monetary terms. It reveals a

particular characteristic of all the characters' inwardness: the confusion of feelings, affection, ethical and moral values with wealth, money and gold. Inwardness in the play is portrayed, therefore, by this astonishing confusion between money and affection.

Bassanio delays his speech, perhaps because he may know Antonio's feelings for him. However, Antonio's impatience shows his anxiety when he says, "I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it" (Shakespeare, 1992, p. 15). Antonio's response reveals an immediate willingness to help and provide him with all Bassanio needs: "My purse, my person, my extremest means, / Lie all unlocked to your occasions" (Shakespeare, 1992, p. 17). Like Bassanio, Antonio also juxtaposes and confuses *person* (feelings, thoughts) and *purse* (money), showing he cannot separate money from personal issues and feelings. In a moment of anxiety, Antonio's verbal slip confusing *purse*/*person* unveils that he makes no distinction between feelings and money. This verbal slip reveals the confusion and exchange of feelings for wealth. On a subtler level, the merchant believes that his generosity to Bassanio will create love and affection because his inner self is pervaded by inward dispositions for wealth. As a matter of fact, this is a sort of wealthy or material inwardness conveyed by this exchange, association and confusion between affections, feelings and wealth, fortune, gold and money. Therefore, a person is valued and esteemed by what she possesses instead of her spiritual traits and feelings. Schoenfeldt (1999) also uses "material inwardness," but in the meaning of bodily sensations and the humoral fluids which were supposed to govern the individual inwardness. Thus, what I mean by *material inwardness* or *wealthy inwardness* is valuing a person's affection for the money, gold, and jewels a person has. Therefore, Shakespeare introduced such verbal slips in order to represent Antonio's inward feelings and dispositions.

In that sense, Gervenus (1969) states that the play depicts "the relation of man to property". According to him,

> *[...] the gold of the world, the image of show, the symbol of all external things, is money, and it is so called by Shakespeare and in all proverbs. To examine the relation of man to property, to money, is to place their intrinsic value on the finest scale, and to separate that which belongs to the unessential, to outward thing, from that which in its inward nature relates to a higher destiny* (Gervenus, 1969, p. 34-35).

Gervenus (1969, p. 35) highlights that the question of man's relation to money and wealth is ever a question of his relation to man, as it was not possible to see it apart from man. Those were anxieties caused by the new emerging mercantile society, whose new ideal of getting money at any cost threatened and concerned some people. Thus, many characters talk of feelings in fiscal terms, such as Bassanio, Portia, Lorenzo, Jessica and Shylock. Therefore, the verbal slip *purse/person* enhances the range of symbolic motives, whereby the characters confuse and substitute feelings for wealth. Unconsciously, what moves them is their desire for possession, even if they need to cheat others.

That trait pervades the other characters' feelings in the play. In Newman's (1985, p. 71) opinion, in classical and renascent comedies,

> *[...] comic plots were traditionally based on a fundamental binomial, eros and money. These two elements combine in a seemingly infinite number of permuta-*


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> *tions to generate comic plots. They are also reciprocal because in both classical and early Italian comedies, money is required to gain love – whether simply as payment for the courtesans and prostitutes of classical and early Italian comedy, or as the price of winning the* innamorata *in marriage. The importance of this dichotomy is as clear in Shakespeare as in Italian comedy – in* The merchant of Venice, Much Ado, *and* Measure for Measure. *In post-Tridentine Italian comedy [...], this reciprocal relation between money and eros is called into question.*

Shakespeare uses this binomial, eros and money, to enhance the characters' double-faced attitudes and feelings. Shakespeare suggests Antonio's erotic desire in his confusion between purse/person. In fact, such pun represents his confusion between money and feelings and the conflicts embodied in his inwardness.

Furthermore, the speech suggests other meanings in the play. Adelman (2008) remarks something very important about Antonio's and Bassanio's relationship. In such a pun, Antonio unveils his deepest fantasy in the play, the fantasy of being unlocked, which will not be done by Bassanio, but by Shylock. By being *unlocked*, he fantasises about his desire of being unlocked to Bassanio, showing his inner heart to him and being opened up and satisfying his homoerotic desires. Also, *purse* had a sexual connotation in the Elizabethan age. Drakakis (2010, p. 183-184) states that "purse" meant also "scrotum":

> *The pun on* purse *and* person *initiates a complex range of fiscal and sexual associations connected with the figure of Antonio;* purse *means primarily a receptacle for carrying money [...], but there is also a direct association between* purse *and identity: one's* purse *and oneself (*person*) [...]. However,* purse *also means "scrotum" [...]. It also suggests a connection between fiscal and sexual commitment that is there from the outset but is never specified.*

Nevertheless, even though his heart remains *unlocked* to Bassanio, he cannot carry out his fantasy. Thus, to accomplish Antonio's desires, Shylock will potentialize such fantasy with his bond. Shylock's bond is, on a deeper level, an attempt to open up Antonio's heart and symbolically reveal his innermost feelings. In fact, one could think that Bassanio will unconsciously propose to Shylock a deal, a bond to open up Antonio's heart. Thus, the bond to open up the body, which remains unlocked, is an offer of the merchant's inward dimensions to Bassanio. Therefore, it seems that Antonio tries to offer his love to Bassanio but also tries to purchase Bassanio's love.

In that sense, Hinely (1980) proposes that Antonio's love for Bassanio is revealed as possessiveness expressed through his generosity. According to him, "The intensity of his emotion is coupled with a sense of not receiving the full love he desires in return. [...] The equalizing factor in his relationship with Bassanio was money" (Hinely, 1980, p. 234).

Lending money to Bassanio, Antonio thinks, will multiply it and transform it into love and affection. In a certain sense, as a sort of "usurer of love", he imagines he can breed love from money, and his interest in money-lending is to receive Bassanio's love.

Furthermore, Janet Adelman (2008) affirms that Antonio's fantasy is to be circumcised by Shylock as he seals the bond. According to her, Antonio, in his unexplainable melancholy, bears within the desire of being circumcised and

opened up, which haunts him once it evokes the sentimental ambivalence of his fear/desire for castration. Furthermore, for Adelman (2008, p. 131), Shylock symbolically represents the *ur-father* (the primordial father) not only of Jessica but also of all Christianity. Thus, it is Shylock who is going to carry out Antonio's fantasy of showing his heart to Bassanio. Shylock plays such a role as he tries to open up/circumcise/castrate Antonio. The merchant's fantasy is reinforced when he easily and willingly accepts Shylock's bond.

Furthermore, according to Adelman (2008, p. 120), the trial scene (IV, i) is

> *[...] erotically charged once it feeds the audience's voyeuristic bloodlust and promises Antonio the masochistic satisfaction of his desire to unlock himself to Bassanio. Better: in an economical gesture, it promises to provide both satisfaction of and punishment for the desire that would rend him.*

Therefore, one of his ambiguous feelings is the desire to be unlocked to Bassanio, yet what threatens him is his unconscious fear of being castrated by the ur-father of the play.

Also, he phantasmatically re-imagines his paternal figure in Shylock. Norman Holland (1966) had already pointed out Shylock's role as a paternal figure to Antonio in the play.[1] His sadness is not just due to his fear of losing Bassanio but also perhaps because he re-imagines phantasmatically the paternal figure whenever he faces Shylock. Shakespeare represents Antonio's inward feelings by suggesting his innermost masochistic desire for circumcision and castration.

Simultaneously, Adelman (2008) points out that Shylock could be seen as the figure of an anatomist-inquisitor who would open Antonio's heart for inspection and would punish him for his desire to be unlocked and loving Bassanio. Such a stereotype is not a Shakespearean creation, but it was taken from the mediaeval bizarre stereotypes which used to represent the figure of the Jew as stingy and cannibal. Thus, Shylock's punishment would entail Antonio's "inside on his outside, making his desire and shame visible to all" (Adelman, 2008, p. 121). What Shylock would make is the exposition of the merchant's inwardness, which would be noticeable on his body through the act of circumcision and castration.

Furthermore, the critics have not emphasised an interesting detail in Shylock's name. *Shy-lock* alludes to Antonio's desire to be himself *unlocked* to Bassanio. It is worth remembering that *unlocked* echoes a *shy lock*, which evokes Antonio's fantasy depicted in his desire to *unlock* his heart and his feelings for Bassanio. There might be erotic connotations implied in the pun *unlock/Shylock*. Thus, Antonio's fantasy of being himself unlocked to Bassanio is echoed throughout the play by the pun inscribed in the name *Shy-lock*. Remember that the name Shy-lock is repeated constantly throughout the play, especially in the trial scene, when Antonio satisfies his fantasy of unlocking himself to Bassanio.[2] Therefore, *unlocked* and *Shy-lock* introduce a symbolic constellation in the play, which represents and mirrors Antonio's desire in Shylock's circumcising/castrating action.

1 For the representation of Shylock as a paternal figure to Antonio, see Norman Holland (1966).

2 What remains is to discover whether the word *lock* had any sexual connotation in Elizabethan Age, as, for example, the word *ring* had. The word *ring* suggests sexual connotations in the last act when Portia and Nerissa quarrel with Bassanio and Gratiano, who had given away their rings. In vain have I searched for some sources to illustrate such connection; no critics suggests that *lock* had any sexual connotation as *ring* had in Elizabethan Age. However, by contiguity, if such a meaning is checkable, such echo enhances the complex range of sexual, erotic and homoerotic associations crystallised in Shylock's name.

## Two Antonios

Furthermore, O'Rourke (2003) reveals that there were two famous Antonios in Shakespeare's age. The audience could identify them as the probable prototypes of Shakespeare's Antonio. The first "Antonio", Antonio Perez, was a Spanish *émigré* to England who was probably running away from the Spanish Inquisition. He was prosecuted by the Inquisition for Sodomy in 1592 and took part in the powerful and dangerous Essex's circle. Antonio Perez (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 379) was "particularly disliked by Elizabeth" because of his contribution to the prosecution and execution of Roderigo Lopez. Queen Elizabeth I liked Lopez very much; he was her particular physician and perhaps an intimate counsellor too.[3]

The second "Antonio" was Francis Bacon's brother, Anthony Bacon, who had been prosecuted and condemned for sodomy in France in 1586. According to O'Rourke (2003, p. 379), around 1594, he was prosecuted because he was "in debt for money he had borrowed" years before. Once he was involved in Essex's circle too, he was disliked by Elizabeth I mainly because he was in favour of Bacon's advancement in the government. Francis Bacon (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 379) was "involved in the circulation of political, financial and personal favours" to both Perez and Lopez. Yet, as Francis Bacon had lost the Attorney General's place to Cocket, Antonio Bacon started to write against Lopez, which displeased Elizabeth I very much. Thus, these two famous figures could have been in the minds of many people in the audience, just as perhaps in Shakespeare's mind when he created Antonio.

In that context, one can figure out what the Elizabethan audience would have felt and imagined about Shakespeare's Antonio on stage: this sort of sad man of lower social rank, who seems to be in love with a gentleman, must have caused great astonishment. Similarities with both Antonios could have been reminded by Antonio's manners and attitude towards Bassanio. Likewise, Antonio's description as a gentle Christian must have caused displeasure in the audience, who would not feel identified with such a Christian. They would have distrusted his attitudes and inner feelings. His manners were suggestive of a man whose mind was filled with sinister dispositions such as arrogance, disdain and aggression. Also, Antonio's sadness would be repudiated by Elizabethan audience because they were usually festive and happy people. In fact, they liked jokes, satires, clowns' performances and comedies. They would not feel compassion for a hero whose first verses characterise him as a melancholic and sad man. The Elizabethan audience would feel suspicion and could regard him as submissive and hypocrite.

## The homoerotic relationship and the Renaissance opposing views on it

It is supposed that Antonio and Bassanio have a homoerotic relationship. In that sense, there are some points of view which demonstrate that the homoerotic affections in Renaissance culture were very ambiguous.[4] On the one hand,

3 See Honan (2001).

4 Shakespeare took part in the play's plot from the Italian play *Il Pecoroni*, wherein the merchant is an uncle to the bankrupt gentleman. Shakespeare omitted such detail and put it in an ambiguous term in order to create dramatic tension. Solanio just states that he is a *kinsman* to Bassanio. However kinsman does not reveal whether they are cousins, uncles or nephews, or if they are merely of the same nation. This definition is given by *College Dictionary* (1975).

Patterson (1999) discusses the positive view of the age on the issue of homoerotic relationships; on the other hand, O'Rourke (2003) presents Renaissance negative views on it. Patterson (1999) argues that male friendship was not a strange and negative topic in Renaissance literature. According to him, some writers before Shakespeare had written about male friendship or *Amity* as an affirmative form of friendship in that period. For Patterson (1999, p. 10), "it may be that the current confusion about eroticism and sexual practices in Renaissance England does not mean that there were no early modern systems or structures that incorporated and even valued homosexual acts." He argues that Antonio's love for Bassanio is a sort of "frustrated sexual desire" and that his passionate love echoes an early "tradition of homoerotic friendship, or amity" (Patterson, 1999, p. 10). Amity was defined as friendship, which represented an identity between two men and was based on the value of "same-sex love". An ensemble of tropes was employed in poetry, such as in Sir Thomas Elyot's story of *Titus and Gysippus in his Boke afamed the Governor* (1531), which identified Amity and homoerotic friendship. The characters in those texts were recognised and seen as homoerotic; however, such a relation was not rejected in the early 16th century.[5] Just in the second half of the 16th century, those relationships started to be despised, especially by Puritans.

The problem in *The merchant of Venice* is not Antonio and Bassanio's homoerotic relationship but that two men from different classes have a relationship: a merchant, pertaining to one of the lowest social classes in England, and a bankrupt Gentleman. Thus, for some time, the difference in social class in such a relationship was more repudiated than in Amity. Moreover, the merchants' reputation caused anxiety and discontent among them. For instance, an epochal report illustrates that the merchants in London were not well recognised socially and morally. As a reaction to such anguishing feelings, John Wheeler wrote in 1601 an essay called *A treatise of commerce*, which insisted on the importance and dignity of the merchants as a profession and a vocation. Wheeler preaches that being a merchant could be suitable to the nobility, though the common assumption was that only people from lower classes could work in such a metier. His essay suggests that such a profession was not well-esteemed in the Elizabethan age.[6] In a report from the age, Wheeler comments: "Now, albeit this affection [of merchandising] be in all persons generally both high and low, yet there are of the notablest, the pricipalest traffickers which are ashamed, and think scorn to be called merchants" (cf. Kaplan, 2002, p. 232). His was a reaction to the prejudice against the merchants who felt ashamed of their metier.[7] Thus, some people in the audience could naturally regard Antonio and Bassanio's

5 Alan Sinfield (1998) also identifies amity as not necessarily a negative relationship. According to the author, "While the entirely respectable concept of the friend was supposed to have nothing to do with the officially abhorred concept of the sodomite, in practice they tended to overlap. Friends shared beds, they embraced and kissed; such intimacies reinforced the network of obligations, and their public performance would often be part of the effect. So the proper signs of friendship could be the same as those of the same-sex passion. In instances where accusations of sodomy were aroused, very likely it was because of some hostility towards one or both parties, rather than because their behaviour was altogether different from that of other who were not so accused" (1998, p. 172). See Alan Sinfield (1998).

6 See Wheeler's essay in Kaplan's (2002, p. 230-235) edition to *The Merchant of Venice*.

7 In the same sense Patterson (1999, p. 12) reveals that "Amity acknowledged eroticism's power to ensure loyal service in men whose economic and social bonds would otherwise be open to question. In a Tudor court where 'new men' lacked the blood and property ties to one another characteristic of feudalism, and in a social world where men were as available to same- as to cross-sex attractions, a representation of male lovers compatible with heroic masculinity and good citizenship grasped the imagination with rhetorical force. Amity did not avoid the implication that deep friendships might have an erotic component but constructed same-sex desire in ways that made it commensurate with civic conduct and aristocratic ideals."

relationship, but they could despise their connection because they were from different classes.

A man like Antonio would be immediately perceived as homoerotic by his dispositions in society. For example, among such traits, Antonio risks his life for Bassanio; both declare their love publicly and "make hyperbolic vows of eternal devotion" (Patterson, 1999, p. 12). When Bassanio says to Antonio, "I owe the most, in money and in love" (Shakespeare, 1992, p. 15), he shows his affections and debts effectively and financially. Patterson (1999, p. 10) enhances the "dramatization of the failure of male friendship in a radically shifting mercantile economy – an economy that seems better regulated by a social structure based on marital alliance and hetero-sexual reproduction."

Consequently, Puritans could think that Antonio and Bassanio's relationship threatened to corrupt social and financial order. Puritans preached that men should not have sodomite relationships; likewise, they should not practice usury. Therefore, the main point is that according to aristocratic values, Amity was accepted by aristocrats for some time. However, relationships between men from different social classes were significantly repudiated and undervalued.

Moreover, Amity could be a way of being a bachelor and resisting marriage.[8] If there were any sexual element in Amity, it was allowed, but it was considered an "inherently narcissistic desire" (Patterson, 1999, p. 12). However, friends were not said to be sick or lonesome in the amity tradition. According to Patterson (1999, p. 12), "his virtue and integrity come from an enduring love for his companion, and it is only gradually that this love is seen as a peculiar elitism or at odds with marriage." However, *The merchant of Venice* presents some problems that suggest that Amity and romance were no longer endured in Tudor England. If Venice was conceived as a patriarchal and family society, Antonio would be completely at odds with this society. The tragicomedy dramatizes the problems of the lovely friends "in a society that is re-evaluating its definitions of love and its virtues – a shift so disruptive that Antonio as amorous lover seems sadly outmoded, himself a kind of anachronism" (Patterson, 1999, p. 14). Shakespeare built Antonio in a marginal position.

Furthermore, Patterson (1999, p. 14) highlights that "the merchant who lends gratis in the spirit of friendship does not automatically signal a noble character, as does the gentle exemplar of gift-giving in a tale of amity, but seems, instead, foolhardy and impetuous." Thus, their relationship lacks the trope used to represent the lovely friend in a fused physical and metaphysical relationship (Patterson, 1999). Though there is a lack of reciprocity between them, Antonio believes that lending money will "generate love," though he risks everything he has (Patterson, 1999). Antonio becomes a bankrupt merchant by risking his life for Bassanio.

O'Rourke (2003) discusses quite an opposite view of Antonio's and Bassanio's friendship. He starts his essay by stating that Shakespeare's play intends to criticise the Christians due to their own "hypocrisy in projecting their own worst traits onto the scapegoated figure of the Jew" (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 375). He points out that the Venetians were represented, in Tudor England, as both usurers and sodomites. According to the author,

8 For example, see more details in Honan's (2001, p. 217-244) biography *Shakespeare*. It is said that Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* is dedicated to the Count of Southampton, Henry Wriotheley, just as his *Sonnets* were poetic undertakings whose goal was to convince the Count to get married, because he refused to marry Elizabeth Verre and his behaviour was labelled as homoerotic.

> *[...] the stability of the Jewish/Christian opposition in the play, which seems to be anchored by the repeated use of the word "Christian" to refer to the Venetian characters, is unsettled by the repeated juxtaposition of inconsistencies, contradictions, and hypocrisies in the Tudor stereotyping of Jews and Italians* (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 375).

Tudor identification with Antonio as a merchant would be completely odd and repudiated, once the "hated foreign usurers in London in the 1590s were mostly Italians, known popularly as 'Lombards' and there was a long history of English resentment of Lombard merchants" (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 376). Besides that, Italians were not just hated because they were merchants and usurers, but also religious issues were at stake since both the English Church and the Roman Church were always in conflict.

Moreover, Italian merchants and Jews were very close in the Tudor imaginary, as a 1593 handbill represents such an idea (O'Rourke, 2003). This handbill was edited just right after Lopez's execution in London records that "Your Machiavellian merchant spoils the state, / Your usury doth leave us all for dead / [...] And like the Jews you eat us up like bread" (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 377). The equivalence between the "Machiavellian merchant" and "the Jews" is a metaphor suggesting that "Elizabethan xenophobia" put side by side Italian merchants and Jews. If the Elizabethan imaginary was very xenophobic to the Italian merchants, in the same way, it was very axiomatic in Elizabethan theatre that the Italian merchants were not "more economically virtuous than Jews" (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 377).

For example, this issue is more evidently depicted in the play *Three ladies of London* (1588), by Robert Wilson. The play presents a rather virtuous Jew (Gerontus) in opposition to a meagre and Machiavelli merchant (Mercatore). This play is one of the sources of Shakespeare's play, *The merchant of Venice*. However, Shakespeare made it more complex by putting a meagre Jew, who mirrors the Christian hypocrisy and cynicism. By the mirroring device, the playwright represents the Christians' inward sinister dimensions

When Antonio reveals to Bassanio that "my purse, my person [...] lie unlocked to your occasions" (Shakespeare, 1992, p. 17), he is suggesting something very axiomatic of the Tudor age. According to O'Rourke (2003, p. 377-378), Antonio's metaphor enhances Elizabethan stereotypes about the "sexual behavior of Italians". O'Rourke (2003, p. 377-378) states that a

> *[...] fourteenth-century appeal for the expulsion of 'Lombard merchants' charged not only usurious business practices but also the accusation that the Lombards had "brought into the realm the shameful sin of sodomy, that is not to be named".*

Besides that, Antonio and Bassanio would be immediately identified with and associated to the Italian and Lombard merchants.[9] Just to have an idea of such association, some years after the play's presentation in 1607, Sir Thomas Sherley wrote an essay to the king named *The profit that may be raised to your majesty out of the Jews*. In such an essay, Sherley (2002, p. 224) reveals that in London, most of the Jews were merchants.[10] This association was clear in the audience's

9 Hinely poses that usurers and sodomites were associated and compared.

10 See the essay in Kaplan (2002, p. 223-225).


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mind. By such characterisation, the Elizabethan audience would feel uncomfortable, uneasy hearing that an Italian sodomite merchant who criticised usury was identified as an exemplary and well-respected Christian. The audience would reject Antonio as a Christian because of his evident hypocrisy and cynicism.

Therefore, according to such details, both Christians and Jews in the play were seen as stereotypes and were disdained by Elizabethan audiences. Nonetheless, it is not awkward to think that Shylock's attempt at revenge would be accepted or even praised by some in the audience that were eager for bloodshed and slaughter. In fact, many people in Shakespeare's age frequently watched public executions with the same spirit as they would watch a play (Honan, 2001). As a result, Shakespeare may have created Shylock as a character who embodied the potential energy and traits of a hangman. On the other hand, the audience could feel compassion when they saw Shylock being plundered and sabotaged by the Christians in the trial scene. In fact, the audience's feeling and reaction to the play is suggested in the first publication of the play, in 1598, when Shakespeare needed to change the original name of the play to *The Marchaunt of Venyce or otherwise called the Jewe of Venyce*. The addition of Shylock in the title of the play was influenced by the audience's reaction to the play. Therefore, such a reaction might have been an exciting and different view of Shylock.

## Final remarks

As it was discussed, inwardness is an inner space rooted in inward mysterious dimensions suggested in judgement, conscience, and anxieties. McGinn (2007) also analyses the problem of inwardness, considering the self, his constitution, and his implications in some of Shakespeare's plays. Thus, Shakespeare works with several levels, such as judgements and conscious manipulations, involuntary gestures and anxieties, suggesting desires, intentions, and reasoning which are beyond conscious will and feeling. There is something in the self that goes beyond our understanding and which deludes it all the time. Inwardness is more or less comparable to mental floatations, suggesting deviations and inner debate. In that sense, indeterminacy, vagueness and a set of "mental fluxes" make room for ambiguity, paradoxes, and incongruity of the self.

This paper analysed Antonio's sadness and his ambiguous relationship with Bassanio and Shylock. Antonio's inwardness, expressed in his sadness and anxiety, represents his inner self floating in indefiniteness and awkward instability. He cannot control his feelings and he cannot recognise them since they are controlled by some *mysterious forces* in his inwardness. Even if he tries to define them and search for their cause, such indefiniteness continues obfuscated and floating in his mind. Shakespeare introduced the mimetic device of indefiniteness to signal the obscurity, ambiguity, and floatation of inwardness. He uses an aesthetically inward dimension to construct this mimetic construction of a self whose inwardness appears in his bodily feelings at moments of crisis. Thus, in *The merchant of Venice*, *sadness* and *weariness* are symbolic motifs, which weave the constellations of inward characteristics which represent Antonio's and the other characters' inwardness, such as Portia's and Jessica's. By enhancing feelings such as sadness, weariness, and discontent, he represents the

characters' inward dimensions and dispositions in his mind through the mirroring device in the play.

Adelman (2008) suggested that Antonio's fantasy is to be circumcised and castrated by Shylock as he seals the bond. Also, for Adelman, Shylock symbolically represents the *ur-father*, the primordial father of the play. Shylock's bond promises the accomplishment of Antonio's fantasy of opening his heart to Bassanio. Shylock plays such a role as he tries to open up/circumcise/castrate Antonio. What is more, the merchant's fantasy is reinforced when he willingly takes Shylock's bond. As Shylock represents the primordial father of the play, Antonio fantasmatically represents his paternal figure re-imagined in Shylock. His sadness is not only due to his fear of losing Bassanio but also because he re-imagines the paternal figure whenever he faces Shylock. Shakespeare represents Antonio's inward feelings by suggesting his inward masochistic fear and desire for circumcision and castration.

Besides that, the discussion highlighted the ambiguous relationship between Antonio and Bassanio. The problem was not Antonio and Bassanio's homoerotic relationship but that two men from different classes had such a relationship: a merchant, pertaining to a lower class, and a bankrupt Gentleman. Thus, social class differences in such a relationship were more repudiated than Amity. As a result, the merchant's reputation could provoke the audience's suspicion of his inward disposition. By such characterisation, an Elizabethan audience would not feel comfortable hearing that a sodomite merchant criticising Shylock for usury was identified as an exemplary and well-respected Christian. They could reject Antonio as a Christian because of his evident hypocrisy and cynicism.

Similarly, the representation of dissemblers and flatterers as Venetians in the age contradicts Bassanio's image. Bassanio's representation echoes reports in Shakespeare's age and hints at the Christians' behaviour as deceitful, flatterers, hypocritical, cynical, and dissemblers. What is suggestive is that before presenting Shylock as stingy, villain, comic and revengeful, Shakespeare suggested Bassanio's image as a fortune-hunter and dissembler, just as Antonio's image is suggested to be a Puritan merchant.

Moreover, both Antonio and Bassanio confuse wealth and affection. Antonio confuses purse/person, money and feelings; Bassanio also confuses and exchanges feelings, affections and love for wealth. He describes Portia as *richly left*, and his speech is full of monetary terms to describe Portia and his intentions.

## Fantasias homoeróticas e fiscais na interioridade de Antonio: medo e desejo de castração

**Resumo:** Esta pesquisa discute a estranha relação entre Antonio e Bassanio, assim como a relação do mercador com Shylock. Sua relação é representada como homoerótica e o desejo de um sacrifício inexplicável de Antonio por Bassanio sugere aspectos da interioridade de Antonio. Shylock é também representado como o pai primordial da peça, e esse detalhe sugere a causa da tristeza de Antonio no começo da peça. O conceito de interioridade é discutido por Maus (1995) como um constructo social e cultural da Renascença Inglesa. Ela analisa a interioridade tomando como base a oposição entre aparências, consideradas falsas e enganosas na época, e interioridade, que era tida como manifestações sinceras e verdadeiras das dimensões interiores do indivíduo.


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**Palavras-chave:** Interioridade. Relações homoeróticas. Subjetividade. Shakespeare. *O mercador de Veneza*.

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