Research Article

Ideological Cynicism: Post-Marxist Analysis of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

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Introduction

Anti-Semitism has its deep roots in history. Its genesis goes as ancient as the time of Moses and the suffering of the Jews, as mentioned in the Old Testament. This ideology of hatred adopted an evolutionary nature throughout history. In each epoch, there are different justifications for the exclusion of the Jews from the Habermasian public sphere, depriving them of any right of citizenship. This might be attributed to the fact that they have been a minority. Minorities are typically the most vulnerable to hostility and harm. Because the hatred of the Jews was a historical norm, all societies and cultures have been adopting it as part of their identity. They absorbed the hatred of the Jews as part of their mission in life.

This long tragic history of loathing had its effects in all fields of life, including literature. One of the main literary figures who deliberately indulged into the depths of this problem was William Shakespeare. Later critics, after the world realized the inhumanistic nature of this hatred towards this minority and the criminalization of this ideology, initiated an anti-Shakespearean campaign in their writing, accusing him of founding the cornerstones of the ideology of anti-Semitism after medievalism, especially in his famous play *The Merchant of Venice*. On the other hand, another group of writers defended the stance of Shakespeare as an author who sought to criticize that dominant ideology of anti-Semitism.

This study belongs to the second group. It adopts a set of cultural theories of great thinkers to prove the innovative method of Shakespeare in criticizing anti-Semitism indirectly and unconsciously.

Literature Review

The issue of Jewishness in *The Merchant of Venice* has been elaborately discussed in the long and rich heritage of Shakespearean studies. Each critic deals with this issue from his own perspective. In other words, the main problem into which some researchers fall is that they tend to decontextualize the text. They divorce Shakespeare's encountering with the problem of anti-Semitism from its socio-historical context, finally leading to inaccurate conclusions.

Cecil Roth's considerable study on Shylock is a comprehensive investigation of the problem of anti-Semitism. He successfully reflects the mental endeavor of Shakespeare while displaying a conceptual image of Shylock as a Jew. He admits that "Shylock was a sheer figment of Shakespeare's imagination… Yet this figment has acquired an objective reality more vital than that of most creatures of flesh and blood" (148). There is an indirect accusation of Shakespeare that he intensified the problem of anti-Semitism and giving the Jews a final typical image, or as Slavoj Zizek terms it 'the conceptual Jew'. Roth unconsciously condemns Shakespeare of complicating the problem further. Nevertheless, he neglected the fact that Shakespeare built his play and the Jewish image upon the previous social assumptions of people at that society. In other words, he borrowed the pre-existing image of the Jews in the mind of people to reverse that image into a form of social criticism by method of ideological cynicism.

On the other hand, Sara Coodin (2017) successfully diagnosed the former problems by taking into consideration the existing social and ideological context of the time. She believes that the play "animates what… was an uncomfortably poignant moral and emotional experience of being Jewish in a world marked by invidious anti-Semitic stereotypes, ones also absorbed and rehearsed by Jews themselves" (6-7). Coodin's admirable study successfully pinpoints the multi-layered problem of anti-Semitism. The complicated problem was that even the Jews themselves had unconsciously absorbed the dominant ideology of anti-Semitism, without being able to critique it, because the power of that ideology was too strong to leave any subject emancipated mentally. Everyone was imprisoned within the bars of those ideological signifiers, failing to think beyond that mentality. In other words, that hatred was logically justified.

Aaron Kitch (2008) also presented an admirable study in this regard. He proposes a more contextualized study of the problem of anti-Semitism in the play. He believes that Jewishness is no longer a matter of religiosity, but transgressed this traditional border to deepen its roots in racial and national arenas.

Michael Shapiro's diagnosis of the Jewish problem in his study (2017) is also considerable. He confidently proposes that it is impossible to reach to accurate conclusions while detaching the play from the socio-historical context in which it was written. The play, according to Shapiro, "draws on several consumptions of Jewish identity, so that Shylock's Jewishness may best be described as a superimposition upon medieval stereotypes of various contemporary ideas about Jews – cultural, biological, and theological" (6). Reading Shylock, then, within the broader historical context reveals the place of Shakespeare and his ideological motives behind his writings.

Methodology

The majority of studies in this arena limited their analysis within historicity. They were divided into contextual reading of the ideology and textual analysis of the text. They neglected an effective power that motivates this attitude in the writing of Shakespeare. Shakespeare succeeded to find the path to the unconscious of his audience. He psychologically presented his agendas, in a way that he safeguarded his authorship from any direct accusation at his time, like siding with Jews, or later critiques as an anti-Semite. He presented Jewishness in a universal manner that matches any particular interpretation.

This study, unlike many others, seeks to encounter the issue of Jewishness in that anti-Semite society from a psychological and ideological perspective. In essence, neglecting one front leads to unrealistic understanding of the play, because each one contributes to the formation of the other. They are inseparable in the sense that both shape a complete and comprehensive viewpoint towards the origin and result of this issue in that particular society.

This research, to prevent falling in the same traditional problems, presents a comprehensive perspective, depending on the psychological and ideological theories of a group of thinkers, like Freud, Lacan, Zizek, and Eagleton, finally to attain acceptable conclusions, away from misunderstanding in this regard. These theorists propose a set of ideas that justify the mental framework of the people of the time and Shakespeare's remedy of the problem.

Shakespearan Ideological Processing

Shakespeare held the rein of his time's social ethics by mirroring the moral needs of his society, as well as of the future generations. He was successful in molding and reshaping the socio-historical context of his time in his masterpieces. One cannot expect the success of any literary work without faithful frank or allegorical representation of his society. Shakespeare in this respect, Marxists critics argue, deliberately underwent "reflectionism", necessarily yielding his texts to the historico-political results of the 16th century context (Tyson, 1999, p. 56). This representation does not imply a soulless mechanic procedure that eludes the innovative realm of literature. Literature must be the reproduction of the real world that steals the reader's view into a forgotten or unobserved angle. Terry Eagleton maintains that: "Literature… does not stand in reflective, symmetrical, one-to-one relation with its object". He believes that "The object is deformed, refracted, dissolved – reproduced less in the sense that a mirror reproduces its object than a 'reflection; of the dramatic-text". On the opposite front, it should be "a transformation of the text into a unique product, which involves re-working it in accordance with the specific demands and conditions of theatrical performance" (Eagleton, 2002, p. 48). Shakespeare transcended this naïve forward reflection of his society and its anti-Semite ideology into a universal remedy that matches all contexts. In other words, he did not suffice with referring to the paralyzing racist and ideologist hatred but sought to take the problem to an extreme, in which the reader is absorbed with disgust with the way the Jews were treated, despite the latter's manipulative strategy in life. Stephen Greenblatt, in this regard, argues that "Shakespeare shared with his contemporaries a keen understanding of the ways that rhetorical devices could be used not only to express powerful feelings but to hide them", asserting that Shakespeare's historical context demanded an indirect form of social reformation, safeguarding him from direct encounter with people's undesired response and the court's fury. This, he needed to employ specific rhetorical devices to layer his thoughts, critiques, and feelings.

However, such rhetorical trickeries pose a paradox of ideological perception and political transaction. Shakespeare exposes the naivety of his audience, who willingly fool themselves and enjoy being trapped in this intellectual blindness. In Greenblatt's words above, the hiding of feelings was easily recognized by his audience. Otherwise, the plays would be completely futile in portraying a specific message to their audience and readers. This deliberately trapping of oneself in ignorance is termed "ideological cynicism" by Slavoj Zizek, considered to be a post-ideological Marxist concept, though refused to be known so by Zizek (Myers, 2003 p. 65). To rephrase, Shakespeare sought to lead his audience to comprehend the inhumane ideology they maintained after they were blinded by the former forcing convictions, regardless of whether they would abandon their racist ideologies or not. He sought to transform his audience from the old-school fundamental belief in an idea into a cynical realm.

The concept of ideology, as a matter of fact, has undergone a very conflicting evolution in its essence. Ideology, as proposed by Marx, is active only at the level of knowledge, which is produced by language to correspond to the outside world or the real world. It sums up in Marx's well-known phrase that "they do not know it, but are doing it," labeled as "false consciousness" (Zizek, 2008b, p. 24).

Nevertheless, Louis Althusser has opposed this classical notion in his *Ideological State Apparatus* that "Ideology has material existence". In other words, "ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. The existence is material" (Althusser, 2000, p. 296). Althusser here tends to refer to the fact that ideology is present in the actions of our life, as when we go to the church, we admit the existence of God before even knowing him.

Having encountered Zizek, however, he entirely rejects the classical notion of "false consciousness". He believes that this naïve concept of ideology is no longer at work in this contemporary intellectual world. He depends on the German thinker, Peter Sloterdijk, to develop his idea that "they [people] know very well what they are doing, but still they are doing it" (Zizek, 2008, p. 25). The subjects of society know the falsehood of the system and its deceiving policy, and moreover, aware of the hidden agendas and interest beyond the ideologies adopted by the system, but still they tend to trap themselves in this paradox and never to renounce it. This is called "ideological cynicism".

Zizek goes on to extend this notion by borrowing Hegel's phases of ideology. This system of thoughts first becomes a doctrine (ideology as a complex set of ideas and abstract notion), second, belief (ideology in its material world and its real outcomes), and third, ritual (this realization of ideas come to be so self-absorbed by individuals that limit their life accordingly) (Zizek, 1994, p. 14). The case study of this research, anti-semitism in Shakespeare's plays, does not simply rise in a society. First, the members of society, as that of the sixteenth century England, suffer from uncontrolled socio-economic deterioration. This cannot be explained simply by alluding to the problems of certain political issues that were caused by the monarchy (because of its totalitarian nature). Here, they attribute their problems to a vulnerable minority, as the Jews, who cannot defend themselves against these accusations. As Zizek maintains: "In the anti-Semitic ideological fantasy, social antagonism is

explained away via the reference to the Jew as the secret agent who is stealing social *jouissance* in the vicious cycle of circulating around the void of the (missing) object" (Zizek, 2008a, p.43). Then, ideology moves on to the second stage, that of belief. Because the Christians, throughout history, held the conviction that the "Jews are forced to wander, so the dogma went, because of their part in the killing of Christ". (Cohen, 2009, p. 25). This belief is deeply rooted in the theology of the Christians that is manifested in their daily interaction with Jews, as in Shakespeare's plays, specifically in *The Merchant of Venice.* People's hatred towards Shylock is unjustified as if he is the lone reason of their misfortunes and calamities. The belief that he is the offspring of murderers of the Son of God is stabilized in people's unconscious, a driving power that justifies their antagonism and hatred towards him. On the third level, the ideology of anti-Semitism becomes a ritual in the life of the English people. Eric Hobsbawm, in this regard, proposes that rituals appear to "inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm, 2007, p. 1). The Christian curse on the Jews never reduces its flames because of transforming anti-Semitism from a matter of belief into a ritual. Because the succeeding generations are far detached from the earlier generations of the saints that have absorbed the passions of Christ, they tend to forget the founding aspects of the Christian theology, that of Crucifixion. In order to maintain this belief, it was transformed into rituals at different annual occasions to remind the younger generations of the misfortunes that had befallen Christ. Thus, anti-Semitism never loses the core of its motivating force. Rene Girard in his *The Scapegoat* narrates a story from Guillaume De Machaut, a French mid-fourteenth century poet, that that there were signs in the sky, while people were knocked down by rains of divine stones; cities and district were burnt and destroyed by lightning; a great number of people died. The French poet, who claims to be a witness of these calamities, adds that the death of most of these people was due to the wickedness of the Jews and their Christian supporters, believing that they poisoned the rivers. Then, Girard comments that Guillaume is justified since "he reflects the hysteria of the public opinion", because "The innumerable deaths he tallys are nonetheless real, caused presumably by the famous Black Death, which ravaged the north of France between 1349 and 1350" (Girard, 1989, p. 2). Because of the horrifying effect of the plague and its crushing consequences, people found a justification to manifest their hatred upon the Jews by killing a great number of them in France. This is only because the domination of the anti-Semitism ideology was profoundly unopposable, because of the Hegelian ritual this ideology underwent.

Shakespeare's 16th century context, in this regard, has undergone this dilemma that the members of that society have deliberately victimized themselves to adopt this "ideological cynicism". They were well aware of the failure of this English monarchy to satisfy their social needs, still to admit the validity of the system. Shakespeare and his contemporaries have successfully analyzed the society and reached this conclusion. Accordingly, they cynically, or better to say, sarcastically, employed this fooling technique in their writings through certain rhetorical devices. Shakespeare, in this sense, has become 'the vanishing mediator'. It is the factor, or agent, who links two stages of symbolic, or ideological periods. In other words, the vanishing mediator stages a smooth unconscious transition between two cultural or historical periods. It "serves as the missing link between two symbolic orders, which facilitates the transition between the two and disappears" (Zizek and Wood, 2012, p. 101). Zizek clarifies it further by referring to the revolutionaries who lose their identity once the revolution succeeds: "all of a sudden, the amazed revolutionaries realize that they were mere vanishing mediators whose "historical role" was to prepare the terrain for the old masters to take over in new guise" (Zizek, 2012, p. 684). Shakespeare, in this regard, plays the role of the vanishing mediator, whose role in educating his audience at fighting racism and anti-Semitism is forgotten. Once this awareness prevailed, Shakespeare's efforts disappear into historical oblivion.

In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the writer seeks to acknowledge the universality of human equality. Shakespeare has already presupposed that his audience were aware of their racist anti-Semitist attitudes towards Jew citizens. In other words, the people of the time were well aware of the immorality of their racist attitude towards the Jews, still to treat them so. The problem is that this cynicism does not prevent them from inflicting harm upon the Jews, because they already hate the Jews. As Zizek puts it: "even if the subject mocks a certain belief, this in no way undermines this belief's symbolic efficiency"; in other words, "it continues to determine the subject's activity" (Zizek, 2007, p. IX). Adopting a cynical attitude towards certain ideologies does not make the subjects but very guilty since they are fully aware of the follies they are committing. Hence, Shakespeare adopted this notion of "ideological cynicism "in his play, as a sarcastic technique to make them aware of their degenerate morality, by hiding these moralities behind the speech of Shylock. In act 3, scene 1, Shylock outrageously claims that:

> I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, sense, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same disease, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?... (act 3, scene 1, 58-66)

These words, charged with pain and cry for equality, display the traits that all humans share with each other. The Shakespearean audience were well aware of these facts, yet kept oppressing the Jews. This text is an obvious manifestation of "ideological cynicism". In other words, people were very well aware of what they were doing, but still were doing it. Shakespeare in this text has hidden the feeling of Jewish pain, though his audience recognized this strategy of concealing, yet did not change their attitude, because according to the Hegelian classification of ideology, they have undergone the long-term process of doctrine, belief, and ritual.

Shakespeare, in order to succeed in his task, plays the ideological game professionally. He seeks to release his Jewish citizens from the accusation of the conceptual Jew that dominated the minds and culture of his audience. The Jews, throughout history and specifically in Europe's middle ages, when the Christian theology was at its climax in the public sphere, have been an ultimate enigma, whose ambitions and aspirations were ambiguous and enigmatic to the people. They represented the 'Che Vuoi?' of the European society. They failed to understand their role in the Lacanian Symbolic Order. Their enigmatic position, or this 'Che Vuoi?' (what do you want from me? Or why am I what you say that I am?) comes originally from their historical role in the formation of their culture. The genesis of the Jewish culture was not founded upon obvious requirements. The Israelites were lost, waged wars, wondered the land, only because the God of Moses asked them to do so. The most obvious answer that God proposed to the Israelites, concerning his relationship to the Jewish nation, is "I am Who I am" (Exodus 3:14), adding nothing but more enigma to the social position of the Jews. This vagueness also prevailed in the surroundings of the Jews in different societies. The Jew were the ultimate Other, whose motives are unclear. In this regard, the only solution to this enigma is fantasy. "It is an attempt to fill out the gap of the question with an answer", as Zizek puts it. Fantasy, furthermore, quenches the greedy expectation of anti-Semitism. Here, "the answer to 'What does the Jew want?' is a fantasy of 'Jewish conspiracy': a mysterious power of Jews to manipulate events, to pull the strings behind the scenes". Fantasy's role is vital in this regard, because it "functions as a construction, as an imaginary scenario filling out the void, the opening of the *desire of the Other*" (Zizek, 2008b, p. 128). Thus, Europe's hatred at the time of Shakespeare was constructed by the untrue fantasy that rises naturally as an answer to the question of 'What does the Other want?', leading to catastrophic endings.

Shakespeare's remedy is smooth, avoiding any radical opposition to the fantasy of his fantasy, in fear of being rejected. He seeks to represents the Jews as normal citizens who share the same concerns and needs, differing only at the ideological level. In the Lacanian Real (the ultimate, unchangeable, enigmatic, and traumatic truth), they all are the same, whereas they vary in the outer level of the Symbolic order (the world of language, culture, and ideology). Shylock displays his normal life in his natural everyday requirements, differing only in his ideology: "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following". He adds: "but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you" (Act 1, scene 3). Shakespeare insists to remove the distancing factor of fantasy that imposes unreal accusations upon the Jews. He has become the platform of the silenced other, the Jews, through whom, they found a heard voice to display their common interests. They belonged to the traumatic unconscious, which must be repressed because once it is unleashed, it will cause identity violation to the society. As Lacan puts it, "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" (Lacan, 2002, p. 183). In other words, this enigmatic stance of the other Jew is constructed because of the long suppression the society carried out upon them. In Shakespeare's Europe, they belonged to the traumatic unconscious, whose presence in the society causes nothing but social disturbance and identity violation. In this regard, Shakespeare tends to empty the body of anti-Semitism from its soul, transforming it into mere ideological cynicism.

Europe's ideological cynicism, though prevailing, functions in the subjects' unconscious. They do not reveal this paradox, but are well aware of the unjustified anti-Semitism they adopt. The resulting accusations of fantasy (like that they are the theft of enjoyment, seducers of their girls, robbing their chance for employment and a better life) appear only after they ignore the very first harm they had done to the very Jews they are accusing. Shylock clarifies this point when Salarino demands a rational justification for his insistence upon taking Antonio's flesh rather than his money. He claims his thirst for revenge without any social barriers or disgrace:

> To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else,
> It will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and
> Hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses,
> Mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my
> Bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine
> Enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. (Act 3, Scene 1)

Here, Shylock justifies his next moves. His hatred towards others is the consequence of long periods of mistreatment. He aspires to the psyche of the universal man in his need to revenge his oppressor. He confirms Sigmund Freud's disgust in *Civilization and its Discontents* concerning the Christian injunction to "Love thy neighbour". He believes it is a naïve irrational demand because the neighbor is "someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity to work without compensation, to use his sexuality without his content, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him" (Freud, 1962, p. 302). Shylock also mocks this Christian demand when he proposes a better alternative by taking revenge. According to Zizek, the ultimate source of threat is your neighbor, because he is always after harming you and causing you misfortune. This is exactly what has happened to Shylock, as he expresses his calamity in the above quote. To speak Zizekese, Antonio belongs to the first and second type of neighbors, whereas the society transformed Shylock to become of the third type of the neighbor. Zizek believes that there are three types of neighbors, with whom we coexist in society. The first type is the imaginary neighbor who is like me with the same aspirations and demands: "my fellow human beings with whom I am engaged in the mirror-like relationships of completion, mutual recognition", whereas the second type of the neighbor is the Lacanian big Other, the Symbolic neighbor, who is the "substance of our social existence, the impersonal set of rules that coordinate our existence. The first two types are manifested in Antonio who has been doing harm to Shylock by robbing him, hurting him, destroying his social reputation, leading to the transformation of Shylock into the fourth type of neighbor, the Real neighbor, "the impossible Thing, the "inhuman partner", the Other with whom no symmetrical dialogue, mediated by the symbolic Order, is possible" (Zizek et al, 2005, p. 143). Shylock has been silenced for a long time, whose motives, demands, humanistic traits have been forgotten. This suppression led him to be seen as the ultimate neighbor, the traumatic problematic Thing, who lies in the Lacanian Real, undeciphered. This silence and lack of opportunity led Shylock, and the Jews generally, to be perceived as the ultimate source of harm. This is the reason Shylock moves on to reveal his humanistic characteristics, with which all others have in common:

> Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not the Jew hands, organs,
> Dimensions, sense, affections, passions? Fed with the same means,
> Warmed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject
> To the same diseases, healed by the same means,
> Warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as

A Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed?
Shylock seeks to be transformed back to the first Zizekian type of the neighbor, as normal as any other citizen, who intends no harm, and who hold to secret plot to destroy the society.

Moreover, Shylock adds more complications to the trauma of the Jew when he says: "and what's his reason? I am a Jew". The signifier 'Jew' here contains more than what it signifies. It is loaded with unlimited references that escape symbolization as if there is more Jew than normal Jewish citizen. According to Zizek, "it refers again to that unattainable X, to what is 'in Jew more than Jew' and what Nazism tried so desperately to seize, measure, change into a positive property enabling us to identify Jews in an objective-scientific way" (Zizek, 2008b, p. 107). The word 'Jew' in Shylock's speech quilts a series of signifiers that belong to the ideology of anti-Semitism. He does not need to repeat what his fellow citizens think about the Jews (greedy for gain, seducers of their girls, theft of enjoyment, intriguing spirit), because the quilting signifier of the 'Jew' carries a whole series of ideological signifiers that eludes linguistic symbolization. Here, Shylock seeks to neutralize this ideology and bring cynicism to its extreme, because once the core of ideology is brought forward to the surface, it fails to function any more. A successful ideology must remain functioning in the unconscious of the society. It should never expose itself as an ideology. As Zizek puts it: "the most 'totalitarian' ideology edifice inevitably reveals that not everything in it is 'ideology'… in every ideological edifice, there is a kind of 'trans-ideological' kernel" (Zizek, 2008a, p. 28). To put it in another way, the Europeans of the time dealt with anti-Semitism as something justified and trans-ideological, universal, ahistorical. It is the truth. But Shylock in the above quote diffuses this ideology into the surface of cynicism.

In another masterpiece of Shakespeare, in *The Taming of the Shrew,* he has followed a similar strategy of "ideological cynicism". In the final speech of Kathrina Shakespeare has hidden his disgust of mistreating women in his society, though the audience were aware of their immoral behavior. Kathrina in her final speech cynically announces that:

> What is she but a foul contending rebel,
> And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
> I am ashamed that women are so simple
> To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
> Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
> When they are bound to serve, love and obey.   (Act 5, scene 2, 159-164)

The Shakespearean audience, most probably, were aware of the immorality of treating women in such a disgusting manner, yet they did oppress them despite their awareness of its ugliness and disgrace. Thus, Shakespeare followed the same strategy by concealing his feeling of disgust behind these word, though the audience were well aware of this process of "ideological cynicism", and Shakespeare's sarcastic attitude. However, they willingly trapped themselves in this misogyny, since they have passed the three Hegelian phases of ideology, that of doctrine, belief, and ritual.

Conclusion

Thus, his study adopts a set of cultural theories of great thinkers to prove the innovative method of Shakespeare in criticizing anti-Semitism indirectly and unconsciously. This study, unlike many others, seeks to encounter the issue of Jewishness in that anti-Semite society from a psychological and ideological perspective. In essence, neglecting one front leads to unrealistic understanding of the play, because each one contributes to the formation of the other. They are inseparable in the sense that both shape a complete and comprehensive viewpoint towards the origin and result of this issue in that particular society.

Shakespeare took the ideological cynicism of his society as a for-granted issue. He wrote his plays accordingly. He sought to bring the ideological signifiers to the surface so they halt from functioning anymore. He created his Jewish character in a way that transformed the conceptual Jew from being an ultimate source of harm and threat to a normal citizen who maintains the same demands and aspirations as his fellow citizens. Shylock exposes his humanistic traits, revealing his inner feelings that are universally acknowledged, critiquing at the same time the Christian injunction to "Love thy neighbor", granting himself the right to hate those who have inflicted harm to him.

This paper shows its incapability to cover the cynical mentality of the people of Shakespeare's time, because historical sources do not cover this perspective, since it is a relatively new theory that was proposed by Zizek. Hereby, I suggest that other researchers take this shortcoming into consideration and seek any evidence that proves the cynical ideology of the people of the time.

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