

**Inwardness and Subjectivity in Early Renaissance**  
**Interioridade e Subjetividade no Início da Renascença**

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**Abstract:** This essay proposes to analyse the concepts of inwardness and subjectivity based on the ambiguities implied in early Renaissance. The analysis is based on Maus' and McGinn's assumptions on inwardness, as well as Lacan's mirror stage. It reads this development as a result of the ambiguities of the mimesis of inwardness in some works by Shakespeare. He represented inwardness in the silences, non-said, gestures, pathos, and anxiety of the characters in the play, which constitute the rhetoric of inwardness in the play.

**Key-words:** Inwardness; Subjectivity; Renaissance; Shakespeare's plays.

**Resumo:** Este ensaio propõe analisar os conceitos de interioridade e subjetividade baseados nas ambiguidades implícitas no início da Renascença. A análise é baseada nos pressupostos de Maus e McGinn sobre interioridade, bem como no estágio espelho de Lacan. Discute esse desenvolvimento como resultado das ambiguidades da mimese da interioridade em algumas obras de Shakespeare. Ele representou a interioridade nos silêncios, não ditos, gestos, *pathos* e angústia das personagens da peça, que constituem a retórica da interioridade na peça.

**Palavras-chave:** Interioridade; Subjetividade; Renascença; Peças de Shakespeare.

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## **Introduction**

Shakespeare's work, particularly *The Merchant of Venice*, focused on appearances and subtle inner feelings of the characters. It is a play that represents the paradoxes between outwardness and inwardness, which is suggested by the Shakespearean mirroring device, silences, non-said, bodily gestures, breaks of language and twists of language. But inwardness was a Renaissance issue emerging from previous forms of the representation of an inner-self in other literary forms. However, outwardness was supposed to be false, deceitful, and even dangerous, whereas the notion of the inwardness was seen as true and sincere, even though it was imperceptible to the senses. The forms, moulds and shapes of the appearances could be calculated pretentions, which may not be

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seen as the symptoms of a truthful inward disposition of the mind. Such paradox was not at all an unfamiliar issue to Shakespeare's coevals. Thus, to overcome this gap certain forms of discourses described and identified discursive traits, which constituted the constellations of the rhetoric of inwardness in that age.

Inwardness is an 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*<sup>2</sup> 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 are incrustated in the individual's unconscious.

Considering inwardness as an epochal cultural construct, its traits and shapes are quite different from the modern concept of subjectivity. Inwardness is still a broader concept in English Renaissance Age, rather than our modern concept of subjectivity, which is inevitably pervaded by philosophical concepts and psychoanalytic assumptions. In fact, the notion of modern subject is invested with different traits enhanced by diverse philosophical and psychoanalytic discourses and assumptions. Freud depicts the self as endlessly lost and dissolving in the confusion of the unconscious. Human being is inexorably split by an existential shame supervened by superegoical mechanisms which control and determine the ego. Lacan's subject is determined by the emergence of another figure on the mirror, which makes him aware that the complete image projected onto the other is merely the illusion of totality of the self. In the *Stade du Mirror* essay, Lacan parts from the neurological assumption that the human beings are born in a foetus form, who cannot control its movements, walk, or even keep in a erect position. He points out that until the six months old the baby expresses itself in a set of spasmodic and joyful reaction in its gestures and movements. Then, the mirror phase is considered by Lacan as

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<sup>2</sup> For the idea of the mysterious forces in inwardness, see later on the discussion of McGinn's ideas on his work *Shakespeare's Philosophy*, 2007.

an *identification* process, whereby it sees mainly in the mother's presence just a continuum of its body, as if the mother were its own self. The only thing it identifies is itself joined with the breast of the mother. This is an identification of the alienated image of the identity, which can only be configured through the *imago*. This alienated imago is a hallucinatory projection, which constitutes the foetus' identity for a while, in a phagocytises process, through which the foetus-baby imaginarily wishes to cannibalise the imago. This mirror's stage is more likely a fortress where the self produces barriers to be isolated. For Lacan,

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

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

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

elaborated situations.’ (LACAN, 1998, p. 101). And the child being a foetus does not recognise the mother as the other, but just as the same person. Then the recognition of the presence of the father leads to the consequent recognition of selfness and the other. As Lacan points out,

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

And from the image of this “lacerate body” from this moment on, the foetus can just develop being identified in this compulsively primordial process of phagocytises in every image it sees which reminds it of the *imagos* incrustated in its unconscious. Thus, the subject is the Being of the lack, which always seek for satisfying the endless necessity of totality imagined the mirror’s stage.

Face to such subtleties of modern conception of subjectivity, the term *inwardness* seems to be more feasible to Shakespeare’s drama, because it corresponds to the English Renaissance notion of inwardness. Our modern concept of subjectivity is a term which entered in the English lexicon just later on in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Although some could argue that inwardness is merely a synonym for subjectivity, it seems rather specific to the age, because the emergence of discussions and writings about it demonstrate a concern of defining and grasping it with Renaissance epochal frameworks. Its conception was evident and defined only in the opposition between inwardness and outwardness: inwardness was said to be true and sincere, whereas outwardness was not always able to express the inward space and dimensions of the self. Thus, outwardness or appearances of the self could be invented and pretended. However, it is not the result of language and rational construction, but a historical, cultural, social and even institutional construct of the age, which presumed to perceive the individual’s inward feelings, thoughts, and ideas.

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<sup>3</sup> For more details, see Judith Martins-Costa’s essay *Indivíduo, Pessoa, Sujeito de Direitos: contribuições renascentistas para uma história dos conceitos jurídicos*. *Mutações do Conhecimento: O Renascimento do Homem Moderno*. *Revista Philia&Filia*, Porto Alegre, vol. 01, n° 1, jan./jun. 2010. Available in <http://seer.ufrgs.br/Philiaefilia>, accessed in 25, October, 2011. For the relations between Shakespeare and Psychoanalysis see Philip Armstrong’s *Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 2001; Norman Holland’s work *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare*. New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1966; and Ned Lukacher’s *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience*, 1994.

Inwardness is the perception of the inner-self from outside to an imagined inside, perceived in the bodily traits and gestures, whereas subjectivity is the rhetorical construct of imaginable inner feelings in poetry and philosophy, in an opposite movement from the inside to the outside. Although the play will be analysed in terms of inwardness, sometimes it is necessary to illuminate some traits of inwardness by using some modern psychoanalytical assumptions which contribute to understand Shakespeare's mimesis of inwardness. It is worth noticing that any analysis of inwardness will be inevitably pervaded by our modern sense of self and subjectivity.

This dichotomy between inwardness and outwardness was a noticeable trait in Renaissance especially for Shakespeare's coevals. They were quite aware and worried about the relations between the outward and inward dimensions of the self and of things. In that sense, Katharine Eisaman Maus, in her work *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (1995), analyses inwardness opposed to outwardness. She takes into account the differences between an unutterable inner-self and a theatrical outward which could be intentionally shaped. She studies the epistemological anxieties caused by this gap, the social practices created to keep them and the political purposes which they serve for. Despite the controversies about the consciousness of inwardness, Katharine Maus observes the emergence of a great number of speeches, which presented distinctions between inwardness and outwardness as a common place and a rhetorical and discursive distinction very familiar in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. For instance, Edward Jordan 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),<sup>4</sup> the inward and outward sadness, inward and outward cleanness, inward and outward regret, inward and outward veneration.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, beforehand Augustine had defined two distinctions in human beings: the *homo interior*

<sup>4</sup> For more details about these discourses, see Maus's *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (1995).

<sup>5</sup> These discourses of the age also defended a cautious distinction between the inward and the outward dimensions. In King James' work *Basilicon Doron*, the king himself recommended a careful orchestration of the actions and visual gestures of the king, which can reveal his virtue, for it serves to reveal the inwardness and interpret 'the inward disposition of the mind' to those who cannot see beyond the visual signs and, therefore, 'must only judge of him by the outward appearance' (1995, p. 05). Another example is that of George Hakewill, in his work *A Discourse against flattery* (1611). Hakewill describes ways to recognize a hypocrite: "wolves in sheep's clothing, richly decorated apothecary boxes with poisons inside, beautifully bound tragedies, snowy Mount Etnas with volcanic interiors." (1995, p. 05-06). The flatterers of the court awaken fear and disregard of political commentators of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 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).

and the *homo exterior* (1995, p. 16), the *inward man* and the *outward man*. Such distinctions were never questioned by polemicists of the age.

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

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

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

That was an anguishing problem in a time when new religious practices began to doubt ancient rituals, in exchange of refrained and less theatrical rituals, preached mainly by Protestantism. In such case, Protestants considered themselves practicing inward truth, whereas they accused Catholics of cultivating only outward deceitful rituals (MAUS, 1995, p. 15 and 17). In her opinion, inwardness was shaped mainly by religious impositions which syncretised different forms of rites, provoking then the distrust and anxiety to those new forms of rites and doctrines. Consequently, the perception of a person’s gestures and appearances unleashed the conjecturing of what this person might be thinking and feeling. Maus is quite aware of the possibility of failure in trying to perceive inwardness: ‘The inwardness of persons is constituted by the *disparity* between what a limited, fallible human observer can see and what is available to the hypostasized

divine observer [...]. This disparity is subject to fluctuation, and to intentional manipulation both by the viewer and the viewed.’ (1995, p. 11). The possibility of deception was one of the main concerns, but the possibility of fluctuation and incongruities were also taken into account, since the self was not just a fixed and full-constituted entity, but was constantly dependent on outward cultural constructs, such as the determining rules of the State, church, family, school, and so forth. In that sense, Maus conceptualises inwardness both historically and culturally:

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

She is conscious of our limited tools of analysis due to this epistemological gap between the outward perception and inward truth. But there is no possibility of achieving an ‘inward truth’, even after the long journeys of Psychoanalysis searching for an inward truth. For example, Hamlet never really finds his truth. Anticipating our 21<sup>st</sup> 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 polemicists 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 polemicists and writers created evasive arguments to demonstrate their concern. Thus, Maus defines inwardness and makes a distinction between historical and philosophical categories:

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

In that sense, there are two important fantasies in English Renaissance: the first one is that ‘selves are obscure, hidden, ineffable’; the other fantasy is that the selves are ‘fully manifest or capable of being made fully manifest’. (1995, p. 28). Maus proposes that these notions seem to be contradictory, ‘but again and again they are voiced together, so that they seem less self-cancelling than symbiotically related or mutually constitutive.’ (1995, p. 29). Therefore, she views inwardness as constituted not by a determined set of features, but by variable and fluctuant traits. Our modern concept of subjectivity is voiced by philosophical and psychoanalytical frameworks, whereas Renaissance notion of inwardness was imagined as a rather social, historical and cultural construct. Thus, Maus concentrates her analysis on the historical and cultural arguments. She disdains philosophical and psychoanalytic assumptions, even though it is evident the psychoanalytic framework working on the background of her analysis. As she asserts,

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

In that sense, inwardness can present just an isolated feature or few elements voiced together, whereas subjectivity comprehends symbiotic psychic dimensions of the self. However, Maus is rather interested in what she defines as ‘rhetoric of inwardness’ (1995, p. 30), i. e., the linguistic, discursive, cultural, and social constellations that pervade inwardness. The concern about cultural and historical issues locates the difference of our philosophical and psychological concerns and the Renaissance concerns



about inwardness. Thus, there is no determined set of constellations which defines inwardness in an age, even though they can appear together.

In addition to defining inwardness Maus states that theatre historians researched a significant quantity of data about the representations of the plays and the audience's aesthetic experience. In her opinion,

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

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

Moreover, one can never forget that the construction of a play and consequently the characters' inward space are rather pervaded by the spectators' reactions and perception. Shakespeare wrote for both the high aristocracy and the mob; therefore he constantly thought of creating ambiguities and meaning which could only be grasped and understood by the fewer educated spectators. For example, when Antonio criticises Shylock for citing the scriptures for his own interests, some people could agree with Antonio and claim that Shylock's misuse of the *Bible* was religiously condemnable. On the other hand, fewer educated playgoers could have an opposing reaction: Shylock's discussion of the biblical texts would not be disregarded, because Jews were commonly asked to help Protestants to interpret difficult and complex passages of the *Holy Bible*, as Kaplan (2002) presents in full reports of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Then, the spectators' responses to the play could be partly determined by common-places and prejudices of the age, just as they could be partly determined by more accurate knowledge of the important role of Jewish scholars for the understanding of the scriptures. Therefore, to oppose

different facts from the age and to imagine the audience's reactions enable the reader to see possible ambiguities embodied in the text. These alternative interpretations enable to analyse the text based on co-existent historical and cultural facts in Shakespeare's age, facts which pervade the ambiguities of the play.

In that sense, Drakakis (1998)<sup>6</sup> points out the necessity of 'a simultaneous awareness of the *difference* which a text such as *The Merchant of Venice* generates between its own historically specific concerns and those of the modern world, and of its *sameness* in so far as those historical differences can be collapsed into a timeless presence.' (1998, p. 182). For Drakakis, in a play such as this, complex and problematic historical elements are frequently 'filtered out through the cognate processes of reading and theatrical representation'. (1998, p. 182). Thus, it is necessary (as in Brecht's words) to analyse in necessarily 'critical mediations of literary productions of the past' with our own views on the play.

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

In that sense, Collin McGinn also discusses relations between the self and the philosophical possibilities of knowing the self, in his book *Shakespeare's Philosophy* (2007). McGinn goes beyond Maus' discussion about inwardness, because he perceived the uncontrolled obscure inward dimensions of the self in Shakespeare. He presents the *mysterious forces* which control the characters' inward dispositions of the mind.

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<sup>6</sup> See John Drakakis' essay *Historical difference and Venetian Patriarchy*, in COYLE, Martin. *The Merchant of Venice: contemporary critical essays*. Londres: Macmillan: 1998. (New Casebooks), pp. 181-208.

Inwardness is an inner space incrustated in inward mysterious dimensions, which come out in judgement, conscience, and anxieties. He analyses the problem of inwardness considering the self, his constitution, and his implications in some of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Shakespeare works with several levels in his plays: judgements and conscious manipulations, but very often also with involuntary gestures and anxieties which suggest desires, intentions, reasoning which are beyond the conscious will and feeling; i. e., murky things which the subject cannot control any longer. However, in Kantian assumptions judgement is pervaded by psychic traits, which mingle with and subtly inscribe themselves into one's perception. When one sees another person's action, one can see what he perceives in it through vague impression, suggestions and outward signs. Consequently, judgement can reveal part of the viewer's inward feelings, ideas, thoughts, and anxieties.

In the same sense, in McGinn's opinion inwardness, self, identity are impossible to be defined just by philosophical concepts and epistemological categories. There is something in the self that goes beyond our understanding and which deludes us all the time. Therefore, he puts at stake the fixed, determined definition that the self, inwardness and personality are substantially definable, because when we try to define ourselves we might be deluding us and presenting an evasive idea of all these 'mental fluxes'. When we talk about ourselves, we may be talking, not exactly what we *are*, but what we seem or want to be. In that sense, indeterminacy, vagueness and a set of 'mental fluxes' make room to ambiguity, paradoxes, and incongruity of the self.

McGinn starts the discussion emphasising man's desire for knowledge and scepticism in Western Culture. He affirms that Shakespeare added to the ancient scepticism a new concern – 'the problem of *other minds*.' (2007, p. 07). He enhances the

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<sup>7</sup> However, McGinn seems to have a terminological lack of accuracy in his book: he takes notions as inwardness, interiority, identity, self, individual in a very mixed way: he refers to interior and exterior dimensions, to self, to character, to personality, to inwardness, without specifying what each of these dimensions exactly means, whether they are similar or distinguished. Perhaps he is referring to all these categories together just to make it clear that what we call *inwardness* and its synonyms are just vague definitions, or just a mere attempt to define what these inward 'mental flux', sensations, feelings, and thoughts are. He may ironically use all these known definitions to suggest that what we call inwardness, personality, self is not possible to be defined, once we have to face an epistemological gap: we have no tools, no instruments to measure and define what this self *exactly is*. We can just point out some ideas, suggestions, and evasive notions of what it might be. Thus, we have to look at these constellations of mental flux that vary and change constantly in order to construct and sketch just one vague idea of the self or inwardness. He employs so many words to suggest that it is not possible to define inwardness according to fixed and precise definitions. He might also use this lack of accuracy just to suggest that the gap between inward and outward is so complex, that we are not able to achieve plainness about inwardness. As he points out, 'the richness and variety of Shakespeare's metaphors for the concealment of inner thoughts and motives suggests careful attention to the phenomenon described. The human ability to deceive and dissemble is indeed remarkable; it is one of the main distinguishing characteristics of our species.' (2007, p. 103).

same issue discussed by Maus (1995), the opposition and split between outwardness and inwardness. Nevertheless, McGinn questions how it is possible to know what other people are thinking, their feeling and intentions, because ‘all we observe of another person is his or her body’ (2007, p. 07). There is something that is not perceived in other people’s mind, something hidden, ‘which we can only infer from what is publicly available’. (2007, p. 07). He states that there is no way of knowing what is within a person’s mind, because there is an ‘asymmetry’ between one’s knowledge of the other’s mind (2007, p. 07). Such asymmetry enhances that the mind is private and the body is a public property, and we can only infer one’s mind by bodily and language signs. In that sense, ‘the link between outward behavior and inner state of mind seems tenuous and fragile’. (2007, p. 07-08). Such split turns out to be a problem in all social domains, once all kinds of relationships are conditioned by the

fundamental inaccessibility of other minds [...]. Everything becomes a matter of *interpretation*, of competing hypotheses, with the perpetual possibility of missive error. Overconfidence is the besetting sin here, as people leap to unwarranted conclusions about the motives and thoughts of others. (2007, p. 08).

The only way of trying to know others’ mind is by interpreting and judging, not what exactly occurs in their minds, but that *we* think what goes in their minds. Therefore, interpreting one’s bodily gestures can lead to confusion, misreading and misunderstanding.

Although McGinn recognises the epistemological gap in the analysis of inwardness, he considers the Self as a fundamental entity to analyse this issue. When dealing with arts, and, in this case, particularly the drama, the hidden dimensions of the selves are essential for dramatic tensions. The author considers that drama requires selves in action and ‘conscious beings equipped with a suitably rich psychology’ (2007, p. 09). Dramatic tension also is about changes of the self over time. In that sense, the self and the circumstances around him are interchangeable and the self is determined by outward circumstances. The self is not just configured by inner motives or dimensions, but there are also outer features that contribute to determine it. Thus, McGinn asks: ‘the body has a collection of physical traits that give it the specific form it has, but does the person have a range of mental traits that collectively define his or her personality?’ (2007, p. 09). It is important to focus then on personal indeterminacy, which makes the self not a pre-determined entity, but pervaded by floatation between different and interconnected sets

of inward and outward constellations. This is central for the understanding of the characters, their sometimes enigmatic changes which make the character morph before us. (2007, p. 09).

Nonetheless, the self is not the soul as conceived in religion. ‘Shakespeare regards the self as *interactive* and *theatrical*. The self is interactive in the sense that it makes little sense to ask what personality someone has independent of the social interactions in which he engages’. (2007, p. 10). McGinn links personality to *theatre*, because ‘personality is essentially a matter of how you interact with others – how you affect them, and how they affect you. The self is also theatrical in the sense that it is often best understood in terms of *roles* a person *plays*.’ (2007, p. 11). Though this idea seems superficial McGinn states that building up the self is not faking, but we embody a role which seems sincere and natural. (2007, p. 11). Thus, it is important to remember that the self is constituted by the person’s choices and the circumstances around her.

Since McGinn refers to the actor’s metaphor to illuminate the idea of the self, the self as *theatrical* and *interactive*, we can better perceive inwardness if we contrapose it to Greenblatt’s idea of ‘self-fashioning’, in his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.<sup>8</sup> For him, self-fashioning is the manipulation of appearances for conquering social and political domain and prestige in the Renaissance Age. It is the conquest of an ever-growing inward space of perceptiveness, psychological awareness of the self and of the subtle interactions with others. Greenblatt analyses the manners of social interaction in English Renaissance, which had their basis only in the self-reference of the individual. Those manners of interaction and relationship shaped appearances and behaviour by an attitude of always veiling inwardness and, at the same time, imposing those self-patterns of conduct on the other, generally defined as an *alien*. It was a way of conquering prestige and social power through violence and aggression against the *other*. Greenblatt studies the notion of *self-fashioning*, since in the 16<sup>th</sup> century individuals, identities and behaviours could be fashioned and manipulated artificially, based on the self-reference of the subject in something outside him.

For Greenblatt, Shakespeare’s male characters are constantly worried about constructing and defining their masculinity and identity. Yet these constructions are done exclusively through abrogation, violence, and aggression towards the woman, the Moor, the Jew, the Witch or the *other*. This kind of attitude was not strange in terms of social

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<sup>8</sup> See Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 1984.

and public attitudes in Renaissance age.<sup>9</sup> According to Greenblatt,

self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any authority achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss. (1984, p. 09).

The invention of the *alien* can be seen as closely intermingled, yet this aggression is veiled and hidden through self-fashioning in the modes of interaction in language. There were ‘always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity’. (1984, p. 01). Probably, there was much less autonomy in the self-fashioning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century than beforehand, so that the discipline imposed on subjects of the middle-class and aristocratic subjects by social institutions, such as family, state and church, was too severe. Autonomy was an evident problem in that age, but it was not a fundamental one. What was more important during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century was that there was a deep change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetical institutions, which used to determine the fashioning of individual identities (1984, p. 01). In Greenblatt’s opinion, if there occurred changes in the social mobility, there consequently emerged new modulating moods of power by both family and state, which determined social mobility in that age (1984, p. 02). The author finds out that the 16<sup>th</sup> century is a moment of the emergence of an ‘increased self-consciousness about fashioning of human identity as manipulable, artful process.’ (1984, p. 02). Hence, changes of self-fashioning attitude in English Renaissance had caused changes of meaning which provoked anxieties and suspicion. This may not suggest something positive any more, a social practice linked to manners and demeanours of the elite, teachers and parents, but ‘it may suggest also hypocrisy, deception, and adherence to mere outward ceremony.’ (1984, p. 03). As Greenblatt defines,

Self-fashioning is in effect the Renaissance version of these control mechanisms, the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment. Literature functions within this system in three interlocking ways: as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes. (1984, p. 3-4)

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Greenblatt analyses works by Tomas Morus, Tyndale, Wyatt, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, showing that their works build up the characters’ social and economic ascension through many modulations and impositions of language and power. Thus, those attitudes could be seen as a way for those very authors of insinuating manners of construction of their own identities and creating mechanisms of imposition and conquering benefits, prestige and social power through violence, abrogation, and aggression against the *other*.

By analysing texts of the authors and the personal life of Tomas Morus, Tyndale, Wyatt, Spencer, Marlowe and Shakespeare, Greenblatt interprets the social interaction among the symbolic structures perceived in those authors' lives and in society as constituting a single complex process of self-fashioning, in order to understand how social identities were fashioned and shaped in the English culture in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (1984, p. 06). According to Greenblatt, it is possible

to achieve a concrete apprehension of the consequences for human expression – for the 'I' – of a specific form of power, power at once localized in particular institutions – the court, the church, the colonial administration, the patriarchal family – and diffused in ideology structures of meaning, characteristic modes of expression, recurrent narrative patterns. (1984, p. 06)

Greenblatt is concerned with a common feature very particular to all the authors, i. e., they embody a deep economic, social, and cultural mobility. All of them had come out from a limited social context circumscribed by powerful figures. They almost had no contact with power, yet they had got it with their ability of self-fashioning, even though deception comes as a negative result of the self's construction of their own image.

Furthermore, inwardness has two sides: the euphoric inwardness of a new sort of human cleverness, as in Machiavelli's exultation with the powers of manipulation. But there is also the dark side of inwardness: the discovery of helplessness when the subject gets lost in his own tricks, perceptions, calculations such as Shakespeare's Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Richard III and Shylock, who are good examples of these two sides of inwardness. This discovery of helplessness at the end of the plays points to the perceptiveness that something obscure and tenuously uncontrolled pervaded the character's act and made them the victims of their own misacts.

Taking into account the theatrical side of inwardness, McGinn's analysis points out that another way of considering this issue is that society imposes a role upon the subject, and it is up to him to perfect it or not: 'good son, dutiful father, regal monarch', and so forth. (2007, p. 12). This theatrical dimensions of the inward self alludes to a self-fashioned dimension determined by the outer super-egoic structures. There are super-egoic mechanisms<sup>10</sup> in society which circumscribe the self in a restricted domain, such as

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Collins, in his book *From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State* (1989), points out that the Tudor's Society was superegoic-oriented, in the sense that all social domains were controlled and pre-determined by ideological mechanisms which circumscribed the individual in his social domain.

the State, family, religion, censorship, and school. In Elizabeth I's rein she always wanted her subjects to pay attention to formal (theatrical) attitudes to respect the establishment's policies and actions. In fact, she just wanted the people to keep the 'outward' attitude of respecting her policies and restraining social disorder and revolt. As she affirmed once, she did not wish to make a 'window in men's minds',<sup>11</sup> but just to assert the outward respect to conventional ceremonies.

From this point of view, the idea of the character is just an illusion, a construct, a 'varying flux of mental events' (2007, p. 37). That is why a person needs to convey an impression of a particular self to the audience: 'this management of behaviour' is similar to the skills employed by an actor. There is an intention behind that, i. e., producing appearances, illusions and impression. Thus, inwardness in Renaissance Age could be perceived as theatrical and shaped, even though some polemicists resisted such assumption, assuming that inwardness should be true and sincere. From a dramatic point of view, these are not just false impressions, but this is an issue that 'constitutes the self'. This complex process provides the self with a particular identity which envisages and enacts certain roles (2007, p. 46). Coupled with that, the self is not constituted by one single dimension: 'there is not a single personality, lurking somehow behind the other, but a whole range, depending upon the audience.' (2007, p. 46-47). The self has to be envisaged, desired, chosen, and built up in a certain way. Imitation plays an important role, because people build their selves observing and imitating others.

Furthermore, the effects of social institutions created in the self a sense of being predetermined and controlled in his innermost dimensions. These super-egoic mechanisms remain unconscious in the self's inwardness and come out morphed in feelings, emotions and anxieties, whose causes are completely effaced from the self's awareness. In that sense, McGinn points out that Shakespeare

regarded the mind as subject to hidden and *mysterious forces*. It is not that everything that affects a person is transparent to her awareness, so that she always knows why she is doing what she is or feeling the way she does. Not everything in the psyche is subject to the person's rational control. The imagination, in particular, is vulnerable to this kind of irrational influence. (2007, p. 12, italics added).

Thus, there are dimensions which elude the conscious determinations of the self. They are unnoticeable to the self, as the psychic traits incrustated in inwardness. Because

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<sup>11</sup> See Neville Williams' biography *Elizabeth the first, Queen of England*. New York, Dutton, 1962.



of these forces, the self can be divided, even fragmented. McGinn states that

The character is a ‘stranger to himself,’ that he is coexisting with a part of his psyche that is subject to unruly forces. The self is not always a harmonious whole, running on rational principles, but often a *mélange* of conflicting forces, the source of which is unclear. We are as much victims of ourselves as we are of the world around us, with one part of the psyche in rebellion against the rest. Accordingly, we can be mysteries to ourselves, bewildered by our feelings and actions. (2007, p. 12).

The self can be metaphorically described as waves of ‘mental fluctuations’ which change and reconfigure as soon as the self is moved by any inward or outward circumstance. McGinn affirms that ‘the mind can be in conflict with itself, and the self can be correspondingly fractured. Consequently, self-knowledge, like knowledge of the other selves, is not always reliable; a person can be quite wrong about his or her character, and the way his mind operates’ (2007, p. 12). These mental fluxes change all the time and lead to the rebuilding of the self, in a way that it cannot be fully aware of that change, or does not feel and cannot even imagine his inner changing dimensions. The self is not a mere ‘static essence’, as a steady entity through all the experiences of the individual, but it is ‘a dynamic and variable thing, endlessly malleable’. (2007, p. 27).

Furthermore, McGinn analyses Shakespeare’s plays based on philosophical ideas, such as knowledge, scepticism, and causality. Concepts and doctrines refer to the self as a unified persona that sustains us during our whole life, but as we look deep into it, we only encounter this ‘mental flux’. McGinn asks whether it is possible to find out just by introspection what this self really is: ‘we only find particular conscious occurrences – sensations, emotions, thoughts.’ (2007, p. 37). What we feel and suppose to be our character is just a ‘kind of hypothetical construct’, not a ‘datum of a consciousness’.

McGinn states that limitations of knowledge are incrustated in the structure of the human beings’ cognitive faculties and their location in the world. Everything that is sought to know goes beyond our means of understanding and comprehension. We always make *inferences* of what is going on in a person’s mind and ‘these inferences are both fallible and structurally suspect.’ (McGINN, 2007, p. 63). Making inferences is always influenced by our own feelings and conceptions. We wonder what goes on inside people’s mind, but their minds are not available for us to read in their forehead. Then, what we see is always filtered by our inward feelings, sensations, prejudices, ideas and thoughts. When a person is aware of the impenetrability of her mind, she can use this *asymmetry* to hide

and deceive people around her. The mind is a domain of potential concealment, and this concealment is determined by somebody's will. Even though we consider any possible way of analysis, it is not enough to fulfil persuasively the epistemological gap between the inward and outward. For example, the role of language is significant as we deal with concealment. Language makes it possible to know somebody's mind, but it also enables to conceal a person's mind. McGinn points out that 'we can use language as a barrier, not a conduit, a means of deception, not revelation. Language facilitates active concealment, and the better a person is at using it, the better he becomes at deceiving the others'. (2007, p. 65). Lying is also a possibility that leads people to misunderstand a sincere person: a person can desperately try to reveal herself to somebody, and, although she tries it most convincingly, her sincere statements might be disregarded and considered as intentional falsehood (McGINN, 2007, p. 65). That is Cordelia's and Desdemona's case. They try to be as sincere as they can, but Lear and Othello do not read their plainness as the real representation of inwardness, but only as deceitfulness.

Furthermore, the inward space might be a mere simulacrum, consequent of the erroneous perceptiveness of the other. For Baudriallard (1991), simulacrum is a false image of the real, since when one thinks he see the real object, he is in fact defining just an image of what it could be. In the same sense, inwardness can be delusive due to the erroneous perceptiveness of the other and even of us. What is imagined may be what one wants to see or want to be.<sup>12</sup> The inner world is just perceived and imagined by the appareances which are no guarantee of the real inner feelings, ideas, thoughts and emotions. Likewise, lying is a barrier to cancel the self's inwardness, creating a simulacrum of what really goes within the self.

Furthermore, McGinn suggests that the sensibility and the body are intermingled dimensions of the self. Mind and body are closely connected and this is essential to determine and constitute the self. The *embodied agency* highlighted by McGinn is not essentially transcendent or idealistic, but it is the confluence of sensibility and rationality. Even nowadays, as McGinn points out, this is not quite well-esteemed. Just with the emergence of neurosciences, scholars are looking more carefully to these dimensions of the human being, as Damasio does.<sup>13</sup> For McGinn, imagination has an essential role in

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<sup>12</sup> The idea of inwardness as a simulacrum is an interesting suggestion to others research on inwardness. It was not possible to analyse such trait of inwardness in this essay, because it works on the analysis and configuration of the constellations of inwardness, in order to map the rhetoric of inwardness in the play. For more details on the simulacrum, see *Simulacros e Simulação*, 1991.

<sup>13</sup> See Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 2006.

thinking and thus Shakespeare makes

an emendation to the kind of “faculty of psychology” common in his time, a conception of the mind as an amalgam of distinct faculties, various in nature, yet interacting. While traditional authors restricted themselves to the three faculties of Reason, Passion, and Will, Shakespeare adds the faculty of Imagination, to be accorded the same status as the classic three. The imagination is just as much of a force in the psyche as the other three, and cannot be reduced to some sort of “faint copy” of sense impressions. [...] As a natural psychologist, Shakespeare is insisting on the centrality of the imagination in the human mind – with *Macbeth* an extreme case of something universal. This emphasis on the imagination did not really resurface until the Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with Coleridge, Blake, and others. It has yet to be fully appreciated in philosophical and psychological circles even today. (2007, p. 99).

It is factual that Shakespeare, in certain ways, anticipates the romantic high esteem of the imagination and the self. There are many plays which heavily invest in the capacities of imagination, creating elaborate labyrinths of mutual (and mutually tragic) fantasies: just think of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, for example. In a certain way, Shakespeare foresees that the imagination is not ancillary to rationality, but that it is *the* essential ingredient of rational understanding. Almost like a Kantian *avant la lettre*<sup>14</sup>, Shakespeare stages rationality as feeding on imagination; the operations of fantasy are its core support, and a pre-condition of analysis and cognition. McGinn states that Shakespeare is a moral psychologist:

He knows that human psychology and ethical evaluation are never far apart. For the human mind has considerations of morality built into its very structure. We cannot really describe a person’s psychology without adverting to moral matters, since virtues and vices make up character. One person is described as kind, generous, open-minded, and judicious; another is said to be cruel, miserly, closed-minded, and rash: there are all aspects of character, and they are all morally evaluative. There is no value-free description of human psychological nature. (2007, p. 174).

McGinn remarks that it is impossible to judge and evaluate somebody without moral and evaluative categories. If someone were asked to describe his friend without moral categories, the description would be uninformative and limited to physical characteristics. We are naturally bound to describe people with evaluative categories, whether they are qualitative or quantitative. Thus, people are always judging the other

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<sup>14</sup> In that sense, it is interesting to consider those assumptions (and Adelman’s, as we will see further) in order to present some ideas about inwardness. In that sense, if we take into account judgement as something essential in analysing Shakespeare’s plays, we shall consider one of the most striking philosophical systems that ever showed the issue of judgement before: Kant’s Critiques. Such discussion on Kant’s critique will be further extended in chapter 8. See KANT, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Translated with Introduction and Notes by J. H. Bernard. New York: Dover, 2005.

whenever they talk about others or describe them.

Therefore, the problem of knowledge, conscience and judgement pervade Shakespeare's plays, especially *The Merchant of Venice*. Inwardness is deeply related to the perception and judgement of the other characters, who are seen and analysed by the others; it occurs through language, but it is a phenomenon which can also be perceived through the silences, the non-said, verbal slips, pathos, gestures, conscience and anxieties of the characters; also, the dramatist creates the idea of inwardness, by being convincing in his creation of a mimesis of inwardness. Thus, the mirroring device enables the mimesis of the inward dimensions of one character by mirroring his attitudes and emotions on the other. Specifically, in *The Merchant of Venice*, the mirroring device is a literary and theatrical technique whereby Shakespeare suggests one character's feelings and inward dimensions projected and mirrored on other characters' attitudes, actions, ideas and thoughts. The fantasmatic anxiety on the double of appearances and inward dimensions is commonly represented in Shakespeare's drama.

Therefore, in this essay Mimesis is related to Auerbach's notion of mimesis in his *Mimesis* (2007), rather than to Aristotle's concept of mimesis in his *Poetics*. Unfortunately, Auerbach is much more concerned only with the representation of reality through styles, both lower and higher styles, and language. Though he is not worried to depict the inwardness or subjectivity of a character.<sup>15</sup> To complement Auerbach's discussion of the problem of representation in the Renaissance, Claude-Gilbert Dubois (1984; 1995) also presents a renewing reading of the notion of mimesis which places the problem in Shakespeare's age, which will be also important for the analysis of the play. His focuses on the mirror as a technological discovery that was incorporated in arts and literature as a *topos* of representing the other. The mirror represented a unique discovery which fascinated people and created an astonishing impact on the ways of perceiving reality during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Another important detail of the play is that *The Merchant of Venice* does not seem to be a mere comedy. The use of such genre is suggestive, because it enables to introduce ambiguities in the text, letting the reader and the audience feels ambivalent reactions: on the one hand laughing at Shylock's comic traits and at the play's happy ending, on the other hand, bitterly feeling the awkward sensations that Shylock is simply

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<sup>15</sup> For this see especially in Auebach's *Mimesis*, chapter 13 wherein he analyses Shakespeare's plays, especially *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

ruined without moral scruples. The tragic and comic opposition in the play constructs the character of the play, especially Shylock, as a rather complex character. His hatred and his rage may seem comic, but they suggest and represent his inward feelings and dimensions: his hatred, desire of revenge, resentment and anxieties.

Furthermore, the Shakespearean mirroring device suggests that Shakespeare probably perceived intuitively and represented foreclosure in the play. He represented some awkward obscure dimensions of the characters of the play, especially Antonio and Portia, dimensions which are not perceived by them. For instance, Antonio's ambivalent relationship to Shylock, a relationship signalled both in his hatred and in his submissive acceptance of his bond, hides in the lines the ever-denied and foreclosed anxiety towards the cause of his sadness and discontent: the anxiety regarding the paternal figure re-imagined in Shylock. Such idea of the foreclosed cause Antonio's anxiety in his inwardness also can be only seen mirrored in the other characters' anxieties in the play: Jessica's unhappiness and tediousness, Launcelot's conscience to the Jew his master, Portia's anxiety regarding the casket test are all anxieties whose cause lay in the paternal figure, epitomised in Shylock, the *ur-father*, the primordial father of the play, according to Adelman (2008, p. 131). The other characters' anxiety is clearly doubled by the most comic and seemingly secondary character in the play, Launcelot. In II, ii, Launcelot strangely drives the anxiety towards the biological father to Shylock: instead of feeling his conscience when he cheats and mocks his blind father, Gobbo, he feels his conscience and anxiety when he desires to leave Shylock's house. If Jessica's, Portia's and Launcelot's uneasiness in the play is caused by the paternal figure, contiguously Antonio's sadness and discontent is due to the absent presence of the paternal figure in the play, projected onto Shylock, though foreclosed from his inwardness and from the play. Shakespeare perceived at least in a subtler level the obscure dimensions of the unconscious acting on the self's attitudes, dimensions whose causes are quite effaced from the self's consciousness, which Lacan's Psychoanalysis names foreclosure. Shakespeare intuitively perceived something occluded and denied in human behaviour which will be important to Psychoanalysis. The suggested foreclosed cause of Antonio's inwardness is a technique to represent his inward anxieties, insinuated in his sadness and weariness in the play.

Moreover, in the case of *The Merchant of Venice*, bodily traits such as weariness, sadness, tediousness and discontent are symptomatic of psychic traits incrustated in the

inner-self, which come out in moments of tension, especially for Antonio, Bassanio, Portia, Shylock and Antonio. Therefore, there are explicit contents and, beyond them, suggestions which have to be read between the lines of the words and sentences, in the constellations of gestures, repetitions, strange details, dissonances, verbal slips, silences and pathos. That is how Shakespeare constructed his mimesis of inwardness in the play.

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