

**The Character of Shylock as a Cultural Mark: Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Bakathir's *The New Shylock***

*Dr. Maysoun Taher Muhi, Collage of Education for Women,*

BaghdadUniversity/Iraq

[maysootaher@gmail.com](mailto:maysootaher@gmail.com)

*Dr. Maysam Bahaa Saleh, College of Arts, Al-Mustansiriyah University/  
Iraq*

[maysaleh1978@yahoo.com](mailto:maysaleh1978@yahoo.com)

*Sufyan Awad Hasson, English Department, College of Education, Samarra  
University/Iraq*

[sufyaanah@gmail.com](mailto:sufyaanah@gmail.com)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

**Abstract**

This study aims to depict the image of the Jew by two different authors of various periods of time. Undoubtedly, the Image of the Jew had been discussed and depicted in many plays of famous and prominent authors, especially during The Renaissance Era, such as Christopher Marlowe in his brilliant artistic work *The Jew of Malta*. In addition to, William Shakespeare's glorious piece of art *The Merchant of Venice* which is described by Dr. Mahmoud Shetywi, in his article "*The Merchant of Venice in Arabic*" as the play that is considered till now as the most prominent Elizabethan comedy that has been studied, performed and adapted by many universal and Arab modern and contemporary authors ; who one of them is the Yemeni author and playwright Ali Ahmed Bakathir with his adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* which is called *The New Shylock* , in which he relates the traditional Elizabethan image of the Jew to the issue of (The Arab – Israeli Conflict). So, this study endeavors to show the genius dramatic techniques, that are used by both authors and the effect of Shakespeare on Bakathier. *The New Shylock* can be considered an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* with modern modifications and new concepts that serve the purpose of Bakathir. Accordingly, the researchers will rely on the theory of adaptation in excavating the treasures of both texts. Moreover, there are various (psychological, political, social and anthropological) aspects of depth that they tried to convey within their creation of the character of Shylock and what does this character really imply of the essential issues, to criticize and relate them to their own societies and times.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, Bakathir, adaptation, Shylock, conflict

شخصية شايлок كعلامة ثقافية: شكسبير "تاجر البندقية" و بكثير " شايлок الجديد"  
 م.د. ميسون طاهر محيي / قسم اللغة الانكليزية / كلية التربية للبنات/ جامعة بغداد  
 م.د. ميسم بهاء صالح / قسم اللغة الانكليزية / كلية الاداب / الجامعة المستنصرية  
 م. سفيان عواد حسون / قسم اللغة الانكليزية / كلية التربية/ جامعة سامراء

### المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى وصف شخصية اليهودي التي قدمها كاتبان مختلفان احدهما من العالم الغربي ، والآخر من العالم العربي وفي حقبة زمنية متباعدة. والجدير بالذكر ان هذه الشخصية قدمها في أعمال مسرحية عديدة عدد من المؤلفين معروفين في عصر النهضة مثل كريستوفر مارلو في عمله الفني الرائعة يهودي مالطا . بالإضافة إلى مسرحية ويليام شكسبير "تاجر البندقية" التي وصفها الدكتور محمود شتيوي في مقاله "تاجر البندقية باللغة العربية" على أنها واحدة من أفضل كوميديا إليزابيثية والاكثر دراسة ، وأداء وتطبيقا من عدد من الكتاب العالميين والعرب المعاصرين . والكاتب المسرحي اليماني علي أحمد بكثير الذي يعد واحدا من أهم الكتاب المسرحيين الذين تناولوا شخصية اليهودي في مسرحيته "شايлок الجديد" التي قدمها شكسبير الذي يربط الصورة الاليزابيثية التقليدية لليهود بقضية (الصراع العربي الإسرائيلي) ؛ لذلك تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى إظهار التقنيات الدرامية التي استعملها هذان الكاتبان ، بالإضافة إلى أن هذه الدراسة ركزت على الجوانب (النفسية والسياسية والاجتماعية ، وعلم الانسان التي كان لها الأثر الواضح في بناء هذه الشخصية ، وتصويرها وربطها بقضايا المجتمع.

## 1. Introduction

Adaptations are common nowadays in media and literature, though adapting was not something new as Shakespeare himself adapted some of his plays from history or folktales. In other words, "art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories." (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 2) One may always feel the presence of the original text within the one we are experiencing directly. When one calls a work an adaptation, one openly announces its overt relationship to another work or works and that what one sees in Bakathir's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

As indicated by Linda Hutcheon (2006, p.8) adaption can be defined from three perspectives: First, seen as a formal substance or item, an adaptation is a reported and broad transposition of a work or works. This "transcoding" can include a move of medium (a poem to a film) or type (an epic to a novel), or a difference in casing and in this way setting: recounting a similar story from an alternate perspective, for example, can make a plainly extraordinary translation. Transposition can likewise mean a move in cosmology from the genuine to the anecdotal, from a chronicled record or life story to a fictionalized account or dramatization. Second, as a procedure of creation, the demonstration of adaptation dependably includes both (re-)translation and after that (re-)creation; this has been called both

“appropriation and salvaging,” reliant upon your point of view. (2006, p.8) Third, seen from the viewpoint of its procedure of gathering, adaptation is a type of “intertextuality”: we encounter adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of different works that reverberate through redundancy with variety. To put it plainly, adaptation can be depicted as the accompanying: “An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; A creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (Hutcheon, p.8)

The Arab authors, including Ali Ahmed Bakathir, intend to use Shakespeare’s Shylock as a basis for their literary works that depict Jews. So, they considered Shylock as a prototype of The Zionist Zealotry, and they interpret the play as an embodiment of what Zionism really is. On the other hand, though Shakespeare does not express an opinion on the Jewish problem, his play speaks for itself. It invites the Jews to get out of their ghettos, to accept assimilation into their host societies and to renounce ethnic segregation, hatred and narrow – mindedness. Besides, Shakespeare discusses very important aspects of human beings that are implied in the character of Shylock and the other characters’ responses and attitudes towards him, for instance: Shylock’s villainy, his thirst for revenge and his practicing of usury, which was the most urgent issue or problem that had been suffered from by all the societies which included Jews.

Linda Hutcheon (2006, p.7) has declared that: “Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication. And there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying.” At any rate, Ali Ahmed Bakathir, uses “*The Merchant of Venice*” as a starting point to write a propagandist play that deals with the Arab – Jewish conflict and to put the problem of Palestine into an Arabic perspective. Commenting on the genesis of this drama, the playwright suggests its theme occurred to him in 1944, just a few years before the Jewish state was officially established in Palestine. As an Arab writer sensing the imminent tragedy, the idea of the play dawned on him when he read once in a local newspaper about a certain Zionist activist who was quoted as saying in the British Parliament: “Give us our pound of flesh! We will not relinquish our right to it.” So, this quotation was alluding clearly to the (Balfour Declaration), which was announced in 1917, in which the British Government made a commitment to create a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. Bakathir saw an affinity between the Zionist demand to implement the terms of the “Balfour

Declaration” and Shylock’s unswerving drive for the implementation of the law pertaining to the bond between him and Antonio which conditions that if Antonio fails to repay at the certain date of payment, then Shylock is allowed to get back his loan by cutting a pound of flesh from any part of Antonio’s body.

So, the purpose of using such an excuse, is to fulfill his own revenge and in the same time to achieve his advantages and personal demands, which are the same purposes of Zionism that Bakathir depicts in *The New Shylock*. Although the differences that emerge between the techniques that are used by both of Shakespeare and Bakathir, but both two plays appear as an early anticipation for the foundation of the state of Israel in the Middle East. The character of Shylock is considered a representation or embodiment of what Shakespeare and Bakathir intend to illustrate, discuss, highlight and criticize some of the concepts and issues in their own societies. Consequently, it will be the point of concentration in this study. However, there have been some of the critical views and studies of Arab and Universal critics and writers on Shylock’s depiction through different periods of time and the various changes in their interpretations of Shylock’s depiction according to different circumstances of their own societies and times.

On one hand, one of the Arab feminine figures that enrolls through this argumentation is: Fatima Saleh Al – Kurdi, writing in the Kuwaiti weekly, (Majallat - Al – Kuwait) , suggests that one of the ways readers might verify that the history of the Jews is full of blood , treason , falsehood , deception , killing and destruction. So, we notice that these depictions figure so prominently in the works of many Elizabethan playwrights, especially, William Shakespeare. One may agree with this writer in the point that emphasizes the Anti-Semitic attitude that the Elizabethan playwrights intended to reflect through their depiction of the image of the Jew, especially, Shakespeare as he depicted Shylock as a cunning, playful and unmerciful Jew.

Moreover, Zeno Ackermann, a German literary critic says that , German productions of *The Merchant of Venice* during the Second World War delves into the controversial Shakespearean play within the context of the Holocaust. the Nazi regime used the play as a tool for racial propaganda, depicting Shakespeare as a Jew hater. So, this act of Shakespeare reflects the Anti – Semitic traditions in the Elizabethan Era and shows Shakespeare himself as an Anti – Semitic author. One can believe to some extent that this German critic's view shows and proves a

very important point, which is *The Merchant of Venice* is a highly controversial play that can be interpreted according to the situational context of the critic or the audience. In other words, the audience and the critics' personal acceptance of the Jewish existence, is the most important element that determines whose interpretation of the depiction of Shylock.

On the other hand, many modern readers and audiences have found the play as a plea for tolerance or in other words, they show sympathy towards Shylock, observing him as a sympathetic character or a victim of bad treatment, so his attitude is interpreted from a psychological perspective. So, typically played as a villain until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Shylock has been increasingly portrayed as a semi – tragic figure whose vengeful acts arise from his victimization. In addition to these opinions and views about Shylock's portrayal; some other groups of critics and readers led by the Jewish scholar (Hyam Maccoby) tend to image Shylock as a Semi – tragic character. Those critics try to confirm their point of view according to historical proofs from Jews history in Europe generally and in England especially. Definitely, whenever a person tries to read about Jews through the all historical times, he will find many horrible descriptions domain awful descriptions that are considered as the hallmark of Jews are usurers and money – lenders when usury is considered as a sin in both, Christianity and Islam. So, this thing reinforces the gap between Jews and people from other religions. In other words, this group of critics gives a justification for practicing usury by Jews, and usury became the domain field of Jews' economic activities that enable them to make their livings since they are not allowed to own lands according to the Christian government's laws at that time. In this way, this group of critics based to this incident to create a justification or an excuse for the Jews' cunning act of usury and to present Shylock's attitude in this way as a natural reaction to this unfair law which prevent Jews owning anything in their countries of residency. Honestly, the same excuse is used by Bakathir's *The New Shylock*, when Shylock justifies the Zionist actions and motivations as a natural right to erect a homeland for all the Jews in Palestine, by making use of the (Balfour Declaration), which is similar to the (Bond of Flesh).

## **2. *The Merchant of Venice***

It is the most arguable comedy that is composed by the most effective and eminent pioneer of English literature during (The Renaissance Era). According to many biographers, it is believed to have been written between 1596 and 1598. Although this play is classified officially as a comedy, Shakespeare's genius creation of its characters especially

“Shylock”, the complexity and variety of its dramatic scenes and the various emotions that its conflicts arise in the audience contribute to make the critics and audiences confused to classify it as a comedy since it has some features of Shakespearean tragedy and also romantic plays. So, all these factors explain the reason behind considering this play as a controversial one.

According to Dr. Mahmood Shetywi, The Head of Department of English in Al – Yarmouk University mentions in his critical essay “The Merchant of Venice in Arabic” that, as long as Shakespeare composed a great deal of literary works which are now considered as a fortune not only for England or Europe, but also for the whole world including The Middle East. Shakespeare always tends to address issues and concepts universal, which are related to human being and society. So, his play somehow provides a free advice, moral lessons in addition to the feeling of amusement which is given to the reader or viewer. Another perspective should be put in consideration is, those abstracts or issues that Shakespeare discusses in *The Merchant of Venice* are in a direct touch to urgent conflicts in the Arab World ; which have emerged during the twentieth century and still present up to this day. So, Shakespeare’s treatment for the existence of the Jews in the Venetian society and presenting such a complicated figure like Shylock, with all his ugly physical and spiritual features and merits reflects the European racial and social view for Jews. As long as the usual circulated image of the Jew that presents Shylock as Short, pallid and bald with red hair at the sides of his head which are all characteristics that express satire, absurdness and mockery. In addition to all these features, his harsh voice which suggests his cruelty, evil and hidden hatred towards the Christians in Venice. According to the historical studies that began in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century about Shylock’s portrayal, Jacob Adler believes that originally the role of Shylock had been played by a comedian who is called Edmund Kean as a repulsive clown or alternatively as a monster of unrelieved evil. Furthermore, according to the *Journal of Early Modern Literary Studies*, (Jan.1999, p. 31 – 37), this play is considered to be one of the darkest comedies, it tells the story of a young man, Bassanio , who has lost his fortune and must borrow money to romance the rich lady that he is in love with. Countering this is the story of the Jewish money – lender Shylock and his demand for the (Pound of Flesh), owed him by the Venetian merchant, Antonio who has fallen into Shylock’s debt.

Shakespeare often used in his plays some significant themes and concepts which are sharply relevant to his audience and life in general. So, this contributes to make his literary works as universal pieces of art, that

belong to all human beings in order to take lessons, reinforce their knowledge through the different cultural and historical information that these plays present and also to get some entertainment. However, concerning “*The Merchant of Venice*”, I think that, although Shakespeare created it as a comedy, but he implied it with various messages, themes and concepts which are related to life. So, it seems as if Shakespeare is presenting a reflective image of the conflicts and problems which had taken place in his society and he invites the audience to contemplate about its content. Actually, *The Merchant of Venice* explores issues such as: Money, Religion, Justice, Racism, Isolation, Anti –Semitism and Deception. In fact, each of these important issues or themes has subdivisions which are related together in order to illustrate the fundamental points of the conflict throughout the events of the play starting from the very beginning then the climax or peak of the conflict until reaching the solution and eventually the end of the play. So, the following is a critical illustration of these themes and their effect on the events and consequently the conflict.

### **2.1. Religion:**

It is believed that as long as this play depicts and deals with the image of the Jew, then of course there will be a depiction of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, which is represented in the conflict between Shylock and Antonio. Here, the tension of the religious conflict is reflected in every single scene that shows the mutual feelings of hatred between Shylock and the native Venetians, especially Antonio who keeps on humiliating Shylock by spitting on his Jewish gown, calling him a dog and insulting him for being a usurer who charges high interests. This reflects Antonio’s beliefs as a Christian man, since usury is forbidden according to Christian doctrines. The following quotation from the original text of the play makes a good proof for Antonio’s hostile attitude towards Shylock.

*Signor Antonio, many a time and oft*

*In the Rialto you have rated me*

*About my moneys and my Usances.*

*Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,*

*For Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.*

*You call me misbeliever, cutthroat dog,*

*And spit on my Jewish gabardine-*

*And all for use of that which is mine own.*

*(Act 1, Scene3, 104-111)*

## **2.2. Anti-Semitism, Racism & Isolation:**

This theme and its subdivisions have a deep connection with the theme of Religion. This theme is going to be discussed according to the views of some critics who tend to consider Shakespeare's depiction of Shylock with such ugly physical descriptions and spiritual characteristics as an anti-Semitic attitude. In fact, the act of Anti-Semitism is so prominent in Elizabethan drama, and Shakespeare's Shylock is another sample or prototype of the traditional image of the Jew at the time. According to historical studies about the portrayal of Jews in drama, it has been noticed that in the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jews were often presented on the Elizabethan stage in a hideous caricature with hooked noses and bright red wigs and always depicted as greedy and avaricious usurers. Actually, one can see two Elizabethan samples or prototypes for Jews; one of them is embodied within the character of Barbas, of Christopher Marlowe's, *The Jew of Malta* and the other one is, William Shakespeare's (Shylock). So, this Anti-Semitic interpretation is based on the historical background of the Elizabethan society as an Anti-Semitic one. So, according to this bunch of critics, their opinions present Shakespeare as an author who reflects, represents and conveys the views and perspectives of his community. In addition, the play reflects another aspect, which is a racial one.

If we just contemplate in some historical backgrounds about the Elizabethan Era, nearly 1600s in Venice precisely, and in other European cities, we will notice that Jews were forced to wear a red hat at all times in public in order to be recognized and identified easily. According to the laws at that time, if a single Jew would break this rule, he would face the penalty of death. Also, Jews in Venice had to live in a Ghetto, which is a private district which is specialized for only Jewish citizens in order to avoid clashes with the Christian citizens in Venice. Consequently, Jews were somehow living in isolation and solitude. Thus, it seems that the Jews somehow have an inner tendency to live isolated from other people or to be more specific to avoid integration with other religions, especially Christianity. This appears very obviously in the following quotation from the original text of the play, in which Shylock talks to Antonio:

*"I will buy with you, Sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you".*  
*(Act 1, Scene 3, Line 9)*



It is obvious that Shylock is isolated from Christian society. He can engage with Christians in business dealings and so he has a livelihood, but it is clear from this passage that he keeps his distance socially. He's a Jew in a Christian country, which explains the animosity we see from and toward him. May be this isolation in addition to the tension and bad treatment that Jews had faced from the Christians contributed in arising their hatred, caution and hostility towards Christians. These aspects of Shakespeare's depiction of the Jews situations in Venice reflects a very contradictive side in Shakespeare's Anti-Semitic depiction of Shylock, he somehow shows a sympathetic feeling towards Jews and as if he tries to create or find out a justification for the ill manners of the Jews. In fact, one cannot determine whether Shakespeare is sympathetic or Anti-Semitic towards Jews. May be this what makes Shylock one of the most complicated figures with complicated emotions, conflicts that he has inside him, also the various emotions that he arises inside the audience which refers to Shakespeare's genius dramatic technique.

**2.3. Wealth, Capitalism, Mercantilism and Usury:** Wealth and money play a very huge and significant role in the sequence of events in this play. As long as the plot of the play is centered on a wealthy Venetian Merchant (Antonio), who faces a kind of misfortune which forces him to be engaged to a bond of flesh with a cunning Jewish usurer. Throughout the events of the play, wealth and usury work as fundamental factors in the emergence of considerable terms, such as: Capitalism and Mercantilism which had been previously defined and discussed in the previous chapter, (1.5). Another aspect can be noticed and distinguished throughout this analysis which is represented in the way that Shakespeare portrays the Christians in the play as very generous people; while, on the other side, he portrays Shylock as a greedy usurer who cares so much for money, to the extent that he keeps on mourning and lamenting his loss of ducats more than his loss of his only daughter, (Jessica). This appears obviously in the following quotation from the original text of the play, which shows Shylock's case after his daughter's elopement:

*My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!*

*Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!*

*A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,*

*Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter. (Act 2, Scene 8, Lines 14-18)*

So, this portrayal or depiction is somehow materialistic and mere of humanity, which suggests the traditional Elizabethan image of the Jew, as long as Shylock is considered a prototype of this image.

#### **2.4. Revenge & Hatred VS Mercy:**

It seems as if the theme of revenge is designed precisely for Shylock. His revengeful intentions towards his native Christians in Venice and especially towards Antonio are revealed from the very moment that Antonio asks him to lend him 3000 ducats and in return, Shylock can impose any interests that he wants. So, Shylock immediately get used of this golden chance by imposing his revengeful condition of cutting a pound of flesh from any part in Antonio's body if he fails to pay back the loan in the exact time. However, if one contemplates about this condition from a psychological perspective, we may find some notable reasons which contribute with other social factors to generate such negative feelings of hatred and revenge towards the Christians in Venice. Actually, may be the social and religious tension, racism and bad treatment towards Jews are the reason behind his hostile attitude towards his native society. An additional reason for this condition is that Antonio's good and kind nature towards people and his lending – money without charging any interest affects Shylock's business of usury. This condition seems as a suitable and perfect way to get rid of Antonio.

Shylock's cunning condition enables him to hit or shoot two sparrows with one stone. Another reason for his fired anger upon Christians is his daughter's eloping with the Christian young man Lorenzo. She takes his bag of golden ducats and some Jewels. This increases his hatred and indignation towards them, although he seems to be interested about his money more than his daughter. Therefore, Shylock is very angry and desperate; he intends to show no mercy towards Antonio. In fact, he tends to get rid of Antonio with the same law of Venice, which is an ironical situation. At any rate, revenge ultimately destroys its perpetrator. Actually, this is going to be proved in the end of the play when Shylock is defeated, forced to be a Christian and lost his money in addition to his dignity. So, Shylock's tragic end implies a universal message which invites a human being to purify himself from revenge, try to acclimate with his community and try to live in peace.

#### **2.5. Law & Justice VS Injustice:**

These themes (Law & Justice) have a deep relevance to the previous themes of (Revenge VS Mercy). According to the events of the play; after

Antonio's ships are wrecked and consequently loses his wealth, Shylock starts to demand for applying what he had conditioned before in his contract with Antonio. So, he is determined not show any mercy towards Antonio. In this way and according to the Venetian system of laws, Shylock is allowed to cut his pound of flesh from Antonio's body, since Antonio fails to pay back the debt at the exact time. Although, many noble-men in Venice, (including Bassanio after he marries Portia and becomes a wealthy man again) have offered Shylock to pay him three times more than the original amount of the debt, but Shylock refuses all these temptations and insists on applying the condition of the contract. At this moment, His determination and resolution on revenge is stronger than his desire for money

The real conception of Law, Justice and mercy emerge obviously in the Trial scene. Actually, in the court, Shylock stands against the Duke asking for justice and law to be applied against Antonio. Since, neither the Duke nor anyone in the court hall is able to convince Shylock to get back of this terrible condition of the pound of flesh. The Duke finds himself obliged to apply the law, since Venice at that time is famous for its strict law and justice. Otherwise, Shylock would make a scene that he is not given justice since he is a Jew in a Christian court and consequently, this would result a hilarious religious conflict. An additional reason is that the Duke can't risk saving Antonio from this dilemma on the expense of spoiling the reputation of Venice as a fair state. Actually, it seems as everything goes as Shylock wants and now he is very close to have his revenge upon Antonio and his Christian community. But, as they said, fate has another word; the arrival of Dr. Balthazar, (Portia in disguise) seems as a lifeline for Antonio. At the beginning, Portia gives a speech about mercy hoping that Shylock would change his mind, but the truth is that it seems as if she talks to a stone not a human being. Portia intends to fight Shylock with the same law that he insists to be applied. After that, she explodes her surprise that according to the Venetian system of law, Shylock can cut his pound of flesh from Antonio's body, no more, no less. But, without shedding even a single drop from Antonio's Christian blood, otherwise he is going to be punished, deprived from all his money and even his religion. Now, things are turned upside down and Shylock becomes in a serious situation and he has no many choices. The following quotation is from the trial scene which shows Portia's speech to Shylock about his penalty:

*Tarry, Jew.*

*The law hath yet another hold on you.*

*It is enacted in the laws of Venice,  
If it proved against an alien  
That by direct or indirect attempts  
He seeks the life of any citizen,  
The party 'against the which he doth contrive  
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half  
Comes to the privy coffer of the state,  
And the offender's life lies in the mercy  
Of the Duke only, 'against all other voice.  
In which predicament I say thou stan'st,  
For it appears by manifest proceeding  
That indirectly, and directly too,  
Thou hast contrived against the very life  
Of the defendant, and thou hast incurred  
The danger formerly by me rehearsed.  
Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke.*

*(Act 4, Scene 1, Lines 361-378)*

Shylock is completely destroyed after losing everything he owns even his entity, dignity and religion. Revenge destroys Shylock's life and also his business as a usurer, since he is obliged to be a Christian and usury is forbidden according to Christianity.

### **3. *The New Shylock* ("Shylock Al-Jadeed") or *Two Plays in One Play***

These two titles refer to the same literary work, which was written by Ali Ahmed Bakathir in 1944 and published to the public in 1945. In fact, it deals with such an urgent and serious problem like (The Arab- Israeli Conflict), in addition, the play reflects Shakespeare's influence and impact on Bakathir's style in writing which contribute to make this play as one of the greatest Arab revolutionary literary works, that highlight the Arab-Jewish relations and situations before and after the catastrophe of 1948,

which witnessed the erection of Zionism and declaring Palestine as a Homeland for all Jews in the world according to the Balfour's Declaration, which is extremely has the same significance and function as the "pound of the flesh" in *The Merchant of Venice*. This shows how Bakathir is greatly influenced by the greatest Elizabethan author "William Shakespeare" as he inspired the idea of "*Shylock Al-Jadeed*" and he embodied it in the Palestinian case. Actually, this reflects his: creativity, rich knowledge of different cultures and civilizations and also his ability to create or suggest wise solutions in order to protect the Arabs in general and Palestine in specific from the danger of Zionism. According to Muhammad Abbas Arabi one of the members of the Islamic Association of Arab critics; he discusses the essence of this play in his article which is under the title of (The Adventure and The Historical Determinism), (المغامرة و الحتمية التاريخية), he states that this play does highlight the allegation of the Jews that they have the right to establish their assumed country or homeland in Palestine as the allegation of Shakespeare's Shylock that he has the right to cut a pound of Antonio's flesh and the tragic end which is reflected in both of the two plays.

In "Shylock Al-Jadeed" the main reason of the problem exists before the beginning of the play with Balfour's Declaration, 1917. Also, throughout the critical analysis of this play, there are different aspects and types of conflicts which are going to be illustrated and viewed, in order to highlight a serious message which is the differences among the characters' point of views, is the fundamental reason behind this conflict or problem. On the other side and concerning the form of this play; it consists of two fundamental parts and this illustrates the third title of this play *Two Plays in One Play*. So, it seems the reader as if there are two plays not one. Here is a brief illustration for these two parts:

1.The first part of the play is called "Conflict" or "The Problem" which its events take place in the present time. Actually, the first part ends with reaching to the conflict between Arabs and Jews to its peak.

2.The second part of the play is called: (The Solution), which its events take- place in the future. Actually, this part is similar to the "The Trial Scene" in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. That is for its events take place in Jerusalem's Court in order to discuss the issue between Arabs and Zionists. This part is supposed to present Bakathir's point of view about the crucial solution for this conflict. But, according to the Arab critics in different countries of The Middle-East, such as (Muneer Utaiba & Muhammad Abbas Arabi), they find that his solution is created in a

romantic and ideal frame. Since it is not possible for Arabs to allow the Jewish attempts in order to erect their state in Palestine, on the condition that they have their rights of exiling the Arabs from Palestine; as well as Arabs in other countries have the right to exile all the Jews out of their countries. Actually, Bakathir's idea of the solution is directed to the economic aspect of Israel's existence and survival. Eli E. Hertz, in his article (Mandate for Palestine) mentions that according to Palestine's geographic location which lies in the heart of Arab World and surrounded by: Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, it will be the exact homeland for Jews according to the economic, political and social aspects. In this way, Bakathir thinks that if the Arabs get use of this point, they will be able to surround the Zionist state's trade and commerce and consequently destroying it economically. While on the other side, the Zionists take this advantage of Palestine's geographic location; in addition to the UK Parliament which supported spraying out tribulations, seditions and incitements inside the Arab World. Ironically Bakathir's suggested solution is turned to prove only its falsity and failure because, it seems as if this suggestion provides a golden chance for the Zionists to erect strong, isolated and independent Zionist state from the political and economic aspects, since the United Kingdom is supporting them, there is no chance for Arabs to get back Palestine under these conditions.

Moreover, Bakathir treats and implies some of the issues and concepts within his characterization of the figures of his play. Those issues are summarized in the following points:

1. Using sex and illegal relationships as means to violate Arabs (some of them) away from the right path that they should take and follow.
2. The arrogant and obsessed act or attitude of the Jewish employees towards Arabs, as if Palestine is their own country and homeland. This appears very clearly through Shylock and his followers' cruel manners towards Arabs, lending- money with imposing very high interests and their exploitation of the poor farmers' efforts.
3. The imposition of Hebrew to be: Taught, used and dealt with as the third fundamental language in Palestine, side by side to Arabic and English languages.
4. Spoiling and destroying the Arabic culture and the new Arabic generations in schools by making the administrative staffs in schools composed of mere foreign members.
5. Observing the dominant views about Zionism and making efforts for enriching the Zionist mentality inside the Arabic communities.

The Solution: Concerning the events of the second part (The Solution), as it takes place in The Jerusalem Court during the future time. At the beginning it contains an allusion to *The Merchant of Venice* as the Jews (who are represented by Shylock and his followers) demand to have their “pound of flesh”, and how Shylock mocks Shakespeare by declaring that he wants not only Palestine, but also the whole Arab World as his pound of flesh. After that, the representative of the Arabs in Palestine tries to remind Shylock of how the Arabs used to be kind and gentle towards the Jews before this conflict, while the other nations of the world tend to treat the Jews severely. So, the fruitless argument with Shylock and Cohen continues until the arrival of (Nadia or Faisal), who appears as the representative of the Arab League. Nadia demands to destroy Tel Aviv. The Jews accept this under one condition, which is The United Kingdom, gives them the legal permission to construct their Jewish homeland in Australia instead of Palestine. The conclusion comes with the Jews’ failure, Shylock’s committing suicide and Abdullah’s declaration that Palestine always will remain as one Arabic nation that cannot be cut or divided into parts in order to establish a homeland for the Jews.

### **3. 1 Comparative Study Between Shakespearean Shylock & the New Shylock:**

The last section of this paper tackles the aspects of similarities and differences between the characters of the Shakespearean Shylock and the New Shylock or (Bakathir's Shylock). Consequently, this section tends to show the various (social, political, psychological and religious) concepts and issues that are implied and reflected within the depiction of these two characters. Also, this study aims to combine the various opinions of critics about the points of harmony and difference between Shakespearean Shylock and the New Shylock; especially the points of view that are published in article which are written by Arab critics and writers, such as: Muhammad Abbas Urabi, Muneer Utaiba & Dr. Mahmood Shetywi.

One may shed light on Bakathir’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s Shylock. There are all kinds of reasons for wanting to adapt, in short. Adaptations of Shakespeare may be intended as tributes or as a way to supplant established cultural authority (Hutcheon, p.93). However, Bakathir used this adaptation to show his own perspective of the Jews and what they are capable of to reach their ultimate goals.

Concerning the Shakespearean Shylock, the audience would notice that Shakespeare's depiction of Shylock somehow, tends to be an Anti-Semitic one. In fact, when Shakespeare portrays Shylock as a wicked and cunning

Jewish usurer, he does not calumniate or invent something that is far from the reality of the Jewish characterization. According to M. Utaiba, he states in his article "*The New Shylock ... A Terrorist State*" that the Shakespearean Shylock is the idealistic depiction of the common image of the Jew that the European mentality does comprehend and perceive about Jews, which is in the same time considered agreeable according to the Jews' conception of the successful Jew. The Shakespearean Shylock appears as a skillful, cunning Jewish money-lender, who is willing to do anything in order to gain more money. His business or craft as a usurer who exploits the Christian Venetians' financial troubles, in order to impose high interests and increase his wealth, this behavior makes him the most hateful and repulsive citizen in Venice.

Moreover, the Venetians' hatred towards Shylock increases when he imposes his exaggerated condition of cutting the Pound of Flesh from Antonio's body if the latter fails to pay back his debt. So, a trial is erected in order that Shylock can take back his debt from Antonio, but he fails to take it without shedding Antonio's blood and consequently, Shylock loses his issue against Antonio and the whole Christian Venetian society, as long as he exploits this chance to revenge from Antonio as a Christian member from a Christian society whom Shylock dislikes most since he has a different doctrine.

On one hand, this is the Shakespearean Shylock who lives in a Christian community in Venice, although, he has a mutual hatred with it but, he is obliged to deal and interact with it. On the other hand, *The New Shylock*, which is designed and depicted by Ali Ahmed Bakathir is somehow, more intelligent, witty, cunning and powerful. He also, lives in a different community and different environment or atmosphere. He is a business tycoon, who has various financial and political relations and authorities. Also, he is the effective leader of the Zionist gang that takes the Balfour Declaration of 1917 as an eternal excuse for their criminal, terrorist and illegal deeds, in order to possess the Palestinian lands; using every possible means including: Temptation, money, prostitution and terrorism, as long as they are supported by the British Government, which uses its authorities as a mandating force.

It seems that, the *New Shylock* is depicted with much more depth and richness than the Shakespearean Shylock is, in order to suit the serious message or issue that is intended by Bakathir to be depicted within this character. According to M. A. Urabi, in his article, "*The Adventure & Historical Determinism*", he states that Bakathir's choice for the New



Shylock as a title for his play implies certain significance. In fact, the contemplation about this choice leads us to make a kind of comparison between Shakespearean Shylock and the new Shylock.

On one side, the Shakespearean Shylock, he is a hard-hearted, rude and mercy knows no way into his heart. He exploits the Venetians' financial obstacles in order to increase his profits and widen his business as a professional Jewish money-lender, which get used of every possible chance to defeat his adversary. The Shakespearean Shylock waits for the chance to come for him, then, he will become capable of destroying his enemies and adversaries.

On the other side, Bakathir's Shylock or the New Shylock does not wait for the chance to come for him, but he creates his own chance in order to achieve his devilish aims in Palestine. For instance, he incites Rachel (the young Jewish slut) in order to tempt Abdullah al-Fayad, to his moral descent, as he becomes stained with sins of adultery, gambling, drinking and land- betrayal. In addition, the New Shylock employs the cunning and most skillful lawyer in Jerusalem, who is called Cohen Isaac, in order to regain Abdullah's authority on his lands and wealth, since he is under the guardianship of his uncle Kadhem Basha. I think that, the New Shylock is really witty, since he shoots directly to the defect in Abdullah's personality, which is his stubbornness and youth pride as long as Abdullah is only 24 years old and he is blindly deceived by Shylock's highly deceptive concepts of individuality and independence, especially those which are related to his inheritance. So, Abdullah becomes an easy prey for the Zionist greed.

One may agree with the Arab critics (M. A. Urabi & M. Shetywi) that, the Shakespearean Shylock is a negative character or figure, as long as he waits for the chance to come and he relies on his luck and coincidence. While, the new Shylock is a positive character, a chance- maker, who aims to erase a whole nation in order to erect their Zionist entity in Palestine. From this point, M. A. Urabi illustrates that a spectator or reader, may notice after contemplating in the two depictions of the character of Shylock, that Shakespeare somehow draws two dimensions in his characterization of Shylock, which are:

-The First Dimension: Refers to Shylock's internal sense as an outcast Jew in the middle of a Christian community, and his employment of his craft as a usurer, as a weapon in order to fight the Christians and surround them economically, as he is motivated by his deep hatred and desire for revenge. He considers that he has the right to use every possible means to gain his

aims, as he and most of the Jews believe in a conviction, which is called: (Ethics of Machiavellianism), which justifies their unreasonable deeds.

-The Second Dimension: Refers to Shylock's lacking for the sincere sense of dignity, pride and honor. This appears obviously when his daughter (Jessica), elopes with her lover (Lorenzo), all what Shylock cares about is his money, which Jessica has taken with her. This dimension is highly related to or connected with the first dimension.

Another point that should be put in consideration throughout this comparative study is that; The New Shylock represents a pattern or a prototype of all Zionist Jews all over the world. While the Shakespearean Shylock represents the Jews in Venice only, whom their aims are restricted only upon the economic aspect of the society. While, the Zionist Jews aim for having the whole world from the east to the west, as long as they insist on being as the (Chosen People), or as this term is known in Arabic contexts as (Shaub-Allah-almukhtar). Another thing that should be reconsidered is that, the New Shylock refuses to confess or consider the Shakespearean Shylock as a real Jew. The New Shylock's opinion or personal view about the Shakespearean Shylock is shown clearly in the following quotation which is taken from the original text of *The New Shylock*, as he says:

"شيلوك شكسبير لم يكن يهوديا صحيحا، و إلا لما عجز و لأستطاع أن يحتج على قضااته"

"The Shakespearean Shylock was not a real Jew, otherwise, he would not fail, and he would be able to protest against the judges"

We can notice and compare the trial scene in both the two plays, we will notice a point of similarity between the Shakespearean Shylock and the New Shylock's characterization; which is as the following: Both of the two characters are stubborn and they show their refusal towards any attempts to compromise between the two conflicting sides. Both of the two characters are stick to their demand, which is:

(The pound of ~~meat~~) The Shakespearean Shylock.

(Balfour ~~Declaration~~) The New Shylock.

Although, they do not achieve their aims at the end of the two plays, but they fight till the last moment.

Another aspect of similarity between the two characters of Shylock is that, both of them are defeated by the same law that they demand and do insist on applying it, which is of course an ironical situation, which, I

believe that, it refers to the creative abilities of both Shakespeare and Bakathir, to invent such a brilliant artistic or literary technique, that is related completely to life itself.

From all these similarities and differences between the Shakespearean Shylock and the new Shylock, which are discussed and analyzed by different Arab critics and writers, that are mentioned in the previous sections of this study; we can conclude that Bakathir's Shylock fights over all the fields and aspects of the society. He fights against the existence of the Arabic language, as he uses his authorities in order to impose Hebrew to be the first language in Palestine, as long as language is directly related to the nation's entity and cultural existence. Consequently, the Zionist spirit would be indulged within the Palestinian community, willy-nilly. Also, he fights in the field of Economy, by surrounding the Arabs and controlling their lands and possessions and in the field of Ethics and moral concepts of the Palestinian society, as long as he spreads adultery, gambling and drinking between the Arab youth. The new Shylock shoots directly towards the essential majority of the society, which is youth. Another important matter that should be reconsidered is that; by tempting the Arab youth to adultery and illegal relationships with Jewish sluts, he aims to increase the Jewish existence in Palestine, since Jews have in their doctrine or conviction a belief that is, a real Jew is the one who his mother is a Jew, even if his father is not.

In both of the two plays almost have the same literary basis, almost similar dramatic effectiveness and nearly the same plot. The Shakespearean Shylock intends to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body, specifically, the part that lies near his heart, without any consideration whether this would make his adversary pass away. In the same way, Bakathir's Shylock aims for cutting Palestine from the Arab world and consequently, he will have the whole body for his own.

Shakespeare's creative mentality and literary taste always tend to present views in his plays by using the technique of addressing the universal speech, or in other words, presenting his messages and themes universally. That is why a reader or a spectator feels that it is directed for the whole world and suit any period of time. Similarly, *The Merchant of Venice* makes no exception. The character of Shylock is presented by Shakespeare as a prototype of Jews over various periods of time and within different nations over the seas. They interpret Shylock according to their contextual conception about Jews and the issues or messages that the authors wanted to imply within this character. In this way, Bakathir's

Shylock seems to be more specific than Shakespeare's Shylock; as long as Bakathir's focus is to embody Zionism through this character with all its aspects in order to emphasize the danger of Zionism upon the Arab world, which again, reveals the essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict refers to the Arabs' resistance to Zionism as a regime or organization, which aims to usurp the Arab lands and in the same time defeats all the Zionist false pretenses, that the essential reason behind the Arabs' resistance for them refers to their different religions or doctrines, which is one of the major themes or messages that Bakathir aims to convey throughout his play.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aims to show the impact of Shakespeare on Bakathir's style, technique and sight as vivid, effective and somehow revolutionary author. On one hand, his employment of Shakespeare's Shylock as a basis for his play, does not aim for blind adaptation, but it exceeds the limits that Shakespeare has created within his depiction of Shylock as a representation of the Jews in Venice, specifically. On the other hand, Bakathir as a modern author, aims to develop the different dimensions of this complicated character, as long as, he relates it to Zionism. Somehow, Bakathir uses the same basis of Shakespeare's Shylock in creating his new shylock, but with adding his artistic flavor, by employing his own dramatic techniques, to create a character which is a mixture of issues, conflicts and concepts about the whole Jewish community. In other words, Bakathir's adaptation of Shylock is formed and designed according to a distinctive perspective than of Shakespeare's depiction. Although there are some shared characteristics between these two depictions but, there are some points that create the intrinsic distinction between them. Shakespeare's Shylock seems to be an embodiment of the religious struggle between Christianity and Judaism, particularly in Venice. While, Bakathir's Shylock indicates and reflects the Arab-Israeli conflict, which reveals a significant matter that, the Arabs do not reject Jews as people from a different religion, but they resist them as an organization which is embodied in Zionism. Consequently, this fact leads us to realize that, the conflict in Palestine is a political and not a religious one.

#### Works Cited

Al-Kholi, F. (2011, Dec., 6). Fahmi al-kholi's Post-Camp-David *Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare in the Arab World. Retrieved from <<http://arabshakespeare.blogspot.com>>

Al-Tamimi, N., M. & Basmaad, M., O. (2012, June). The Impact of Shakespeare on Ali Ahmed Bakathir: An analytic study of Shylock Al-Jadeed (The New Shylock). Retrieved from <http://www.bakatheer.com>

Bakathir, A., A. (1945). *Shylock al-Jadeed [The New Shylock]*. Cairo: Maktabat Masr

Barakah, S., M. (2005, Nov.). *Bakathir, Adeeb Tanabaa Bimasat Filsteen Kabl Wukuihaa* [Bakathir, an author who anticipated Palestine's catastrophe before its occurrence]. Mufakirat al-Islam. Retrieved from <http://islammemo.cc < 2005/11/24/5007.html>

Bayer, M. (2007). *The Merchant of Venice*, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and the perils of Shakespearean Appropriation. Jstor. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)

Hertz, E., E. (2010, March). Mandate for Palestine-The Legal Aspects of Jewish Rights. Myths and Facts. Retrieved from <http://www.mythsandfacts.org<conflict<mandate-for-palestine.html>

<http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/apl702/1702/ong.htm>

<http://www.Bakatheer.com>

Hutcheon, Linda (2006). *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge,

Makbool, I. (2011, Sep., 29). *Roaiiah Tahliliah Tadawiliah* [an analytic vision of the Jewish character]. The Jewish Character in Bakathir's Theatre. Retrieved from <http://www.alukah.net/literature-language/0/35007/>

Mustaaid, I. (2015, Oct.). *Bakathir Wa al-Qadiiah* [Bakathir and the Issue]. Palestine in Bakathir's Theatre. Retrieved from <http://m.hespress.com/opinions/281342.html>

Oguntoyinbo, A., D. (2014). Irene R. Makaryk and Marissa Mchugh, ed. *Shakespeare on the Second World War: Memory, Culture, Identity*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto press, 2012. *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 3. Retrieved from <http://www.ciaonet.org~uploads>

Shakespeare, W. (1596-1598). *The Merchant of Venice*. J. Roberts, 1600.

Shetywi, M. (1995). *The Merchant of Venice* in Arabic. Qatar University Qspace. Retrieved from <http://qspace.qu.edu.qa/bitstream/handle>

Urabi, A., A. (2011, Nov.). Shylock al-Jadeed (Al-mugaamarah wa al-hatmmiah al-tarikhiah), (The Adventure and Historical Determinism). The Islamic Association of Arab Critics, 10. Retrieved from <http://www.adabislami.org/magazine/2011/11/414/34>

Urabi, A., M. (2015, Dec., 23). The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Bakathir's Theatre. The 26<sup>th</sup> of September Newspaper. Retrieved from <http://26sep.net/newsweekarticle.php?sid=52242>

Utaiba, M. (2011). Shylock al-Jadeed...Daulah Irhabiah [The New Shylock... A Terrorist State]. Islam online. Retrieved from <http://evantmedia.com/adeeb/new/articledetails.php?id=880>.

Yu, Junjie. (2015). "A Holistic Defense for Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*". *World Journal of Social Science*. Vol.2, No.2. Retrieved from <http://wjss.sciedupress.com>.