
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant*: Wesker Is My Name

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine how Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant* (1976) appropriates the canonical Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1595). The study investigates Wesker's reasons behind his adaptation of Shakespeare's Shylock as a British working-class Jewish playwright. Employing multicultural perspectives, this study discusses how Wesker rewrote his Shylock, subverting and redeeming Shakespeare's Shylock, and how Wesker's version represents class, race, religion, and other cultural phenomena to resemble or differ from the original text's representations. The paper is interested in exploring how Wesker reshapes the popular imagination, the ideological assumptions of the public, and how the cultural tradition of Shakespearean Shylock is viewed. Wesker's personal struggle as a Jewish working-class playwright is one of the vital variables examined in this study. The study reveals how Wesker voices his own literary thought, ideological philosophies, and anger, redeeming himself of the discrimination and the feeling of being an outsider in the British Theatre establishment.

KEYWORDS

Arnold Wesker, contemporary British drama, intertextuality, *the merchant*, *the merchant of Venice*, multicultural approach, Shakespeare, Shylock, postcolonial theory

ARTICLE DOI: 10.32996/ijts.2022.2.1.2

1. Introduction

Hath not a Jew eyes?

Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses,
affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with
the same weapons, subject to the same diseases,
healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the
same winter and summer, as a Christian is? (*The Merchant of Venice*, 1595,3.1. 55-60)

With this memorable speech on humanity, Shakespeare gave his Shylock flesh, blood, voice, and the human dimension that still keeps this character afresh in the collective memory of humanity. With that speech, as Wesker stated, "Shakespeare rose above his time- and the expectation of his audience. And that is the measure of his genius" (in Appignanesi & Quart, 1977, p.565). Shylock, the Shakespearean figure of overwhelming pathos, as Harold Bloom states, "is a villain both farcical and scary, though time has worn away both qualities" (1998, p.171). The timeless appeal of this cultural myth and the journey to its interior have fascinated writers to represent their Shylocks, reflecting their national, racial, sexual, religious, and political beliefs. No previous figure in Shakespeare's plays, as Bloom also observes, "has anything like Shylock's strength, complexity, and vital potential. Shylock's pathos can be termed his *potential*, his possible largeness on the scale of being" (1998, p.182). Shakespeare, as Goddard notes, injected so incongruously in *The Merchant of Venice* "that haunting figure that has grown steadily more tragic with the years until it has thrown his supposed comedy quite out of focus" (1992, p. 115).

This literary creation and other masterful Shakespearean works have long been a proverbial paradise for anyone who wants to enjoy quick success in the field of literary science. Any manner of re-envisioning has been known to work, and new playwrights are often seen exploiting this to their full advantage. Most contemporary writers have been obsessed and inspired by Shakespeare's world, reworking his themes and narratives to echo their own opinions, thoughts, and experiences. Dobson and Rivier-Arnaud (2017) state that key dramatists such as Edward Bond, Heiner Muller, Eugene Ionesco, Carmelo Bene, Arnold Wesker, Tom Stoppard, Bernard Kops, and many others have put their radical originality into the service of adapting Shakespeare. Those contemporary writers, in their drama, operas, novels, essays, etc., raise key questions about Shakespeare's role-playing, narratives, translations, contextualization, metaphors, mysteries, reflections, or interventions, where those writers attempt to deepen the mysteries of Shakespeare's source texts rather than providing answers to them (1-7). Shakespeare's authority and canonicity, as Etienne and Rivier (2017) state, "has been opened anew to the interpretations and experiments of current authors" (p. 162). They add that contemporary authors and artists "voice the plays' silences or, at least, amplify issues only latently embedded in the Shakespearean plays, "giving "birth to challenging compositions, both aesthetically and semantically, as though Shakespeare's presence had softly evaporated to the benefit of new invigorating dramaturgies" (164).

Among those Shakespearean masterful creations is Shylock of *The Merchant of Venice* (1595-96). The play itself is one of the most controversial ones in contemporary performance history. Horowitz (2007) explains that the play's re-examination and re-interpretation have become a receptacle for innumerable ethnic, political, and religious corrections, adaptations, and emendations. Adaptors and directors mandated subversions and provocations of their own standards of positivity and negativity (p.8). Sir Arnold Wesker (1932-2016) wrote his version of the classic in 1976 and called it *The Merchant*. Later, in order to adequately draw attention to it, he renamed it, *Shylock*. The intent behind Wesker's rewriting has been the subject of much debate and intense scrutiny.

This research has been undertaken in order to shed light on a vital missing link connected to Wesker's intent to rewrite Shakespeare's Shylock. Why did Wesker specifically choose to adapt or reinvent Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*? Could it be that Wesker wanted to strike at Shakespeare for wrongful representation of the Jews, or did he want a literary endorsement of their mistreatment, being a Jew himself? Was he trying to target the British society in general because of the continued unfair treatment meted out to Jews in the UK, or better still, might he have wanted to use Shakespearean strategy through the adaptation of a Shakespearean work and, subtly but surely, relay the message that there was another kind of systematic injustice ingrained within the realm of the English Theatre?

These are all significant questions because, per se, Wesker had dozens of plays at his disposal, and to handpick *the Merchant of Venice* in spite of the sensitivity associated with it in the post-colonial, post-holocaust era, indicates an explicit interest in the work, and a very important ulterior motive.

2. Literature Review

To date, several studies have investigated the texts of writers talking back to Shakespeare for different purposes and employing different methodologies. David's "Representations of Shylock in Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant*, Howard Jacobson's *Shylock Is My Name*, and Clive Sinclair's *Shylock Must Die*" (2021) examined the ways in which those contemporary British Jewish authors have revisited *The Merchant of Venice*. He argued that although Wesker, Jacobson and Sinclair approach Shakespeare's play and its most memorable character in very different ways, they share a sense that Shylock symbolically transgresses boundaries of time and space, history and geography; a mercurial, paradoxical figure. According to him, Wesker's play is more didactic than the fiction of Jacobson and Sinclair, but ultimately his Shylock eludes the historicist parameters that he attempts to impose on him.

Another significant study was Özmen's PhD dissertation (2018), "Re-writing Shakespeare in the Twentieth Century: Edward Bond's *Lear*, Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant* and Howard Barker's *Gertrude-The Cry* in Socio-Historical Context." Özmen argued that the works of those three writers are considered both as commentary on the events of their historical background and as plays that question Shakespeare's literary and cultural status. These re-writings were tackled in association with adaptation theory and intertextuality as a postmodern practice. Wesker's *The Merchant* was analysed in terms of identity politics as the play criticises Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (1605) for its antisemitic discourse. Accordingly, Wesker's re-writing produced in the post-Holocaust context is correlated with some events in its historical background, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, Six-Day War and Yom Kippur War.

Another significant study is Luk's "Arnold Wesker's Rewriting of Shylock in *The Merchant* (1976) with a Purpose" (2018). Luk argued that Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant*, with both its subversion and extension of Shakespeare's play in theme, plot and characterization, engages with Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* by means of a counter-discourse. Luk claimed that Wesker's rewriting disrupts the binary as well as Christian conceptions to bestow upon the Jew the 'protean quality' of representing just about any sort of 'Other' but themselves. Wesker's Shylock has rounded humanity and is a cultured, humorous, and book-loving Renaissance man. Wesker puts Shakespeare's work under scrutiny as a culturally constructed world where life can be repositioned

and margins moved to the centre to be in a new light. Likewise, Al-Kahky (2017), in his paper "Destereotyping Shylock in Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant*", claimed that Wesker's *The Merchant* is not merely a destereotyping of the Elizabethan time villain but also a negotiation of the dominant discourse of the world classic *The Merchant of Venice*, especially in the immediate aftermath of the 1973 Israeli-Arab war.

In addition, Maji's "Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant* and Intertextuality: An Adaptation and Appropriation of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*" (2016) explained how Wesker adopts Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and reshapes it in a new fashion. Wesker represents Shylock as a bibliophile, a man of knowledge, a symbol of humanity and a worshiper of true bonhomie. Similarly, Cadariu's (2014) paper "On Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination: Shakespeare versus Wesker (A Dialectics in Time)" discussed Shylock, the archetype of the Jewish merchant in Shakespeare's most controversial play, *The Merchant of Venice*, as opposed to Wesker's play, *The Merchant*. She focused on Wesker's *The Merchant*, which she claimed he wrote in defence of Jewishness, offering the audience Shylock's perspective. Likewise, Scott (2015) "Demythologising Shylock: Arnold Wesker, *The Merchant*; Charles Marowitz, Variations on *The Merchant of Venice*" discussed how both Wesker and Marowitz felt constrained to rewrite Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Their versions, as Scott claims, can be seen as two protests against Shakespeare's play with its prevailing anti-semitism, which is intensely objectionable in the twentieth century.

Saunders' "Anyone for Venice? Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Arnold Wesker's Shylock" (2014) focused on Wesker's motivations for writing his play, *The Merchant*. He explored Wesker's shock at Laurance Olivier's performance of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and the play's irredeemable anti-Semitism with the portrayal of the Jew as a mercenary and someone revengeful sadistic, and without pity. Parlak's study (2012) "Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant*: Re-Reading of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*" demonstrated how Wesker is against the way Jews were presented in Shakespeare's play since Shakespeare was not acquainted with life in Venice at that time. It asserts that Wesker, in this way, tries to stress the impossibility of establishing universal peace as long as racial and religious discrimination continues to exist in the world.

On the other hand, Horowitz's study (2007) focused on *The Merchant of Venice* on the Post-Holocaust Stage. He discussed some provocative interpretations of the stage by European and Israeli Jewish directors, depending upon Jewish actors and directors as an attempt at 'winning some legitimacy' for the production. He focused on the performance history of these post-Holocaust re-fashionings that led to 'Shylock after Auschwitz.' He, at the same time, analysed Wesker's attempt to recreate another Shylock with the Holocaust response in mind. He stated that Wesker maintains his principal 'problem' with Shakespeare's Shylock is that Shakespeare's Jew is unrecognizable to him - a revengeful, hateful, ignorant character.

These studies, in general, highlighted the unique appropriations of Shakespeare's Shylock. Their Shylocks, including Wesker's, were examined as representations of destereotyping, a counter-discourse, subversions, or extensions of Shakespeare's play. Employing multicultural perspectives, this study discusses how Wesker rewrote his Shylock, subverting and redeeming Shakespeare's Shylock, and how Wesker's version represents class, race, religion, and other cultural phenomena to resemble or differ from the original text's representations. The study reveals how Wesker voices his own literary thought, ideological philosophies, and anger, redeeming himself of the discrimination and the feeling of being an outsider in the British Theatre establishment.

3. Methodology

Arnold Wesker's literary engagement with the Shakespearean discourse, revisioning the canonical *Merchant of Venice* and voicing his own interpretations as a British working-class Jewish playwright offers material for exploration from a multicultural perspective. Lois Tyson (2015) states that "cultural criticism, in the narrower definition of the term, argues that working-class culture has been misunderstood and undervalued" (p.281). She adds that "like new historicism, cultural criticism views oppressed peoples as both victimized by the dominant power structure and as capable of resisting or transforming that power structure" (p.282).

In the light of this perspective, the study tries to determine how Arnold Wesker's version of Shylock transmits and transforms the ideological content of the text. The paper also investigates how Wesker's version represents class, race, religion, and other cultural phenomena to resemble or differ from the original text's representations. The paper is interested in exploring how Wesker reshapes the popular imagination, the ideological assumptions of the public, and how the cultural tradition of Shakespearean Shylock is viewed. Wesker's text helps to further participate in the circulation of the Shakespearean discourse, shaping and being shaped by the culture in which the text emerges and the culture in which the text is interpreted. In addition, Wesker's personal struggle as a Jewish working-class playwright is one of the vital variables examined in this study.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The 'angry' Wesker decided to rewrite Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* when he felt he could not be 'quiet' like his Jewish community after watching several productions of the play. He admitted in the preface of his play, *The Merchant*, that he reveres Shakespeare, and is "proud to write in his shadow, the world is inconceivable without him," but stated that nothing would make

him admire it. He believed that the portrayal of Shylock offended him for being a lie about the Jewish character. He said, "I seek no pound of flesh but, like Shylock, I am unforgiving, unforgiving of the play's contribution to the world's astigmatic view and murderous hatred of the Jew" (1983, p. L). When he watched 1973 Lawrence Olivier's portrayal of Shylock and Jonathan Miller's production at the National Theatre, he was, as he stated, "struck by the play's irredeemable anti-Semitism. It was not an intellectual evaluation, but the immediate impact [he] actually experienced." Thus, he decided to cease being "a forgiver" (p.L). Meanwhile, he decided to write his play to offer "a new set of evidence from which a theatre public may choose" (p. Liv). Thus, a number of variables are analysed in this study to display Wesker's set of evidence he intended in his play.

4.1. Shylock as a Universal Figure

First off, with Shylock at the apex, in the center, as well as in the environs of Wesker's work, it is important to acknowledge that the massive interest in his being has to do with his universal repute and emotional and logico-ethical appeal, immortalized by the legendary William Shakespeare. The original Shylock is a symbol of reprehension and oppression, of one subjected to acute injustices and animosity, standing alone, guilty as charged, in a system that contributes the judge, the jury, as well as the jailor from among the adversary. He is a despicable villain, a reprehensible being, damned in life as well as in death.

4.2. Shakespeare's Shylock versus Wesker's Shylock

Shakespeare's Shylock has no voice in Venice, and where he voices himself, there are no ears! This does not, however, deter him from standing tall, voicing his beliefs and vouching for his community. Wesker's Shylock is an empowered reincarnation of Shylock, the original. He is not devoid of the above but is able to withstand all. This is adequately captured in the first act of Wesker's *Merchant* when his Shylock matter-of-factly explains, "they're always coming to attend the festivals, listen to the music. Very exotic we are. We fascinate them all, whether from England where they've expelled us, or Spain where they burn us" (1983, p.7).

Wesker's Shylock is a civil man; he embodies all the characteristics of an educated person and is a prominent individual. His keen interest in knowledge and learning is evident - he houses a library with rare manuscripts and protects them with his life. His repute extends beyond the frontiers of Venice. He surrounds himself with positivity, even against a backdrop of dissension and disintegration. He represents the will to thrive, no matter what. This is a complete departure from Shakespeare's character, who is seen as selfish, subservient, vile and vengeful.

Paradoxically though, for an entity that is subjected to sub-human treatment, Shakespeare's Shylock is economically sound and holds an enviable standing among the league of his adversaries. As a money lender of repute, he holds an important place in his ranks and lends to people across the strata of Venetian society. Even though he uses usury, which is shunned by the custodians of the prevalent Christian faith, he is in demand, his trade endorsed, as he continues to function unhindered. Wesker's Shylock is a step beyond his predecessor. He is further endowed - a man of knowledge, a man of ethics and a man of international renown. He is a patron and custodian of rare literary manuscripts, making him, in the words of another principal character, Wesker's Antonio, a savior of "the world" (p.3). Shylock acknowledges this status bestowed upon him as a powerhouse of knowledge with his self-proclamation, "I'm a hoarder of other men's genius" (p.3).

Another paradox is the undisputable fact that Venice needs Shylock. Both Shylocks represent a despicable portion of Venetian society; nevertheless, Venice benefits from their flourishing commerce. In Wesker's *Merchant*, when Shylock agrees to lend Antonio a grand sum of three thousand ducats, Antonio is embroiled in guilt at the thought of burdening a dear friend. Shylock puts this guilt to rest by putting forth the argument that Venice regularly borrows from him and doesn't respect the upkeep of the loan period, and he tolerates that, so why can he not lend to a friend who reciprocates his feelings. His words, "Your city borrows forever, why not three months for you?" (p. 23) are a testimony to this equation.

Unsurprisingly though, Venice was home for Shakespeare's Shylock – Wesker's Shylock calls it his home and loves it as well, even though he is a pariah in the city. His words, "Oh, I love Venice" (p. 37) and " I love Venice, Antonio" (p. 38), capture this essence and crisis. As Shylock loves Venice, he also contributes towards the elevation of Venetian esteem in society. By willfully agreeing to be an underdog and sanctioning all imposed embargos and restrictions, he has traded off his right to live as a citizen in the free world in favour of his right to exist in his hometown. Venice is all the more lustrous because of the sectioning off of the inglorious segment of their society. In spite of his undisputed standing, Shylock is stuck in a rut in both the Shakespearean take as well as Wesker's. He can only function from the confines of his ghetto. Venetian nobility and men of repute regularly converge upon his modest house, but his own reach is limited to his confines.

Perhaps the most interesting withdrawal of Wesker's Shylock from Shakespeare's is his redefined relationship with Antonio. Where Shakespeare wanted to highlight the ills and injustices of society by pitting Antonio and Shylock against one another, Wesker dealt an outright gamble by pulling down the exact lines of demarcation. The re-invented character of Antonio is an interesting one. He's a Venetian yet isn't a part of Venice's vendetta against the Jews. This is concerning because against the backdrop of acute hatred and loss of trust is a bold friendship blooming in broad daylight. The characters not only enjoy good camaraderie but also

respect one another and harbour the belief that men are equal. This is well conveyed when Shylock implores Antonio to not consider signing a surety against his brotherly loan, "Antonio, let us not quite bend the law but interpret it as men, neither Christian nor Jew. I love you; therefore, you are my brother" (p. 24). He goes on to further express his desire for unequivocal equality, wherein his "dealings with you [Antonio] are sacrosanct." He further continues by relaying profoundly that "my heart needs to know I can trust and be trusted" (p. 24).

The above observations provide ample evidence of how important the character of Shylock has been since its inception in the 16th century and how it single-handedly touches base with several layers of multi-culturism as a lens encompassing several aspects connected to the socio-economic standing of the working or the lower class.

4.3. *Shylock is Arnold Wesker*

In Wesker's work, the re-envisioned Shylock's construct cleverly imbibes the conventional with the contemporary. Shylock is Wesker. He is a metaphorical representation of how certain playwrights like Wesker himself were treated within the British Theatre community. Notwithstanding the common coincidental denominator that both Shylock and Wesker are of the Jewish faith, both, inadvertently, were pariahs in the communities with which they wanted to identify themselves with. There are striking similarities between Wesker and his re-envisioned Shylock, making one wonder if this is not without intent. The construct is such that it meticulously weaves into the story of the man, Arnold Wesker. Instead of engaging in a tell-tale battle and having to deal with its possible ugly aftermath, the creative artist in Wesker took over, and, under the clever disguise of dramatically re-interpreting Shakespeare, he let in, intertwined, like a master craftsman, his sentiments one by one. The cover of Shakespeare afforded him the blanket as well as the needed visibility.

Society will only lend itself to what is the prevalent norm - in Shakespearean times; there was a widespread endorsement for the sub-human treatment of the Jews. In Wesker's prime, there was a lot of sensitivity surrounding communal hatred as a direct result of the Auschwitz incidents and the resultant World War II. This made it difficult to talk about injustices that continued to thrive. The wounds being fresh, addressal of these was a very painful experience. This, however, did not mean that society was ready to put its differences aside. Globally, there was an indication of change, and people were more receptive to the idea of equality; in the United Kingdom, deeply rooted in the ills of inequality, governed by a centuries-old tradition of invasion and colonization, the sense of marginalizing and othering continued to manifest itself both openly and with subtlety.

To Wesker, this continuing triumph of some over others, based primarily on their spiritual beliefs or identities, was a bane. Though he initially seemed to enjoy much success, his adaptations being well received and given coverage, he soon found himself being sidelined. While his contemporaries continued to garner a huge fan following within the Theatre and won respect and acclaim, Wesker felt disrespected and undermined. His subsequent works that were masterpieces by his own rating were brutally brushed aside, and he continued to be, paradoxically, celebrated for what was his "beginner" works, making him feel mocked as if his best wasn't worthy of the establishment's esteemed notice.

At the time Wesker wrote *Shylock*, on the obvious front, he seemed to be in good standing. However, the realization of the impending alienation seems to have already dawned upon him, as he meticulously encapsulated the phenomena of othering in his retake on *Shylock*. He deliberately gave *Shylock* positivity and resilient traits as if to convey that not everybody who is made to live in misery actually does. It is noteworthy to mention here that neither *Shylock* nor Wesker contemplated an exit from the repressive systems that they found themselves in. Whether apprehension was ground for their continued bid to coexist with their oppressors is immaterial; what is important is their undying resolve to continue to hope that things will rectify and there will be a brand new day. Both yearned for acceptance and were willing to stand their ground. Both were meticulous in their trade and were difficult to the sideline, as both were hardworking. As *Shylock* was subject to discrimination, so was Wesker, in his own way. By redeeming Shakespeare's *Shylock*, Wesker basically ensured he was redeeming himself.

5. Discussion

Wesker, as a playwright, suffered the same fate. Though his involvement was with everyone, high and low, and he found national and international acclaim, his wings were pretty much clipped, or so he felt. This frustration was loudly conveyed when he revealed- in some candid interviews- that the Theatre didn't show enough regard for his loftier works and kept fixated on the works he produced as a new entry in the industry. In an interview with Rachel Cooke (2011), Wesker expressed his anger, bitterness, and his sense of regret that his works often had difficulty reaching the British stage. He stated that he could not understand why the National Theatre turned his plays down; a strange way to treat writers, especially reputable ones like him who once had a part in that theatre revolution. He also mentioned that there was resistance to staging *Shylock*. According to him, "the theatre doesn't want to see an attractive Jewish lead, especially when it has a history of cozy antisemitism." Wesker believed there was a problem with antisemitism in the theatre, as mentioned to him by a famous theatre director who said: "the trouble with Arnold is that he cannot be objective about his 'Jewishness,' something he would never have dared say about a black or an Irish writer" (2011). Mark

Lawson relates Wesker's long period of neglect in British theatre to "a tendency to fall out with theatres and critics" (2016). His play *The Journalists* was cancelled in 1972, following what Wesker regarded as political censorship by the cast. This made the playwright serious enemies in both Equity and the National Union of Journalists (2016). When *The Merchant* was expected to be such a success on Broadway four years later, its star, Zero Mostel, died suddenly during previews, ending the run.

As Julia Pascal stressed, Wesker's works were praised as realistic celebrations of working-class life, presenting areas of Britain that had never been seen on the stage. They were revolutionary for their time. Wesker, unlike his Jewish contemporary dramatists, "felt himself to be outside" the theatre establishment and exiled himself to the margins of London, where he turned to write novels (2016). Pascal added that if the young Wesker would have been pleased with the revivals of his early plays, "the mature Wesker was enraged at the exclusion of his later works. Even as the Court was restaging *The Kitchen* [...] As he got older, he spoke more about being marginalized" (2016). His play *Blood Libel* (1996) discussed anti-Jewish prejudice ingrained in the English life as pointed out in *the Merchant*. Both plays, as Pascal noted, "examine the past and also seem to suggest that little has changed" (2016). She stated that Wesker suffered professional catastrophes because of his troubles with the theatre authority, though he continued to have international success. She described him as a European self-made intellectual who "refused to flatter the theatre elite. Had he learned diplomacy, his career might have suffered less. However, had he sought to please, he would never have written texts that were so challenging to the dominant English historical narrative" (2016). She highlighted Wesker's distinctive achievement "in reminding audiences that Jews are an essential part of British history and in presenting a vibrant working-class dynamic that was radical for its time" (2016).

Rewriting Shylock, Wesker - as he mentioned to Appignanesi and Quart- wanted to present his different set of evidence before the 'court.' His play is an "exchange of views," arguing with Shakespeare in the debate form. Shakespeare had said his point of view, but "there are certain facts that Shakespeare didn't know. Perhaps if he had been in possession of the facts, he might arrive at [Wesker's] conclusion" (1977).

6. Conclusion

Arnold Wesker, with his endearing and enduring quality, moral passion, and optimistic tone, gave the literary world another delightful masterpiece in the form of the Merchant. The intent was not as much to take another spin on the Shakespearean *Merchant of Venice* as it was to reveal something sinister that continued to lurk even in the wake of global societal reform: injustice- the gross and widespread kind, specifically made to be the fate of a few. To be a Jew and a pro-Jew at the same time was not working well for Wesker. Though he was relentless in his fight and did not let his enthusiasm wane, he was getting consumed by the very ills he was trying to keep at bay. There were many striking similarities between his character Shylock and himself. Both had a longing for inclusion and acceptance, a need to trust and be trusted unconditionally. As Shylock was subject to discrimination and contempt, so was Wesker, in his own way. All injustices perpetrated on both were- in the eyes of their adversaries- a fitting settlement. And their fault? Being the other. Both, however, were willing to take things in their stride. In spite of the fact that they had obstacles before them, they were willing to stand their ground, continue to work meticulously, and thereby ensure they could not be sidelined. Wesker's text circulates the discourse as well as the political, intellectual, social, and economic power. It embodies a central contradiction of the Shakespearean discourse of Shylock, claiming to open that discourse to newer interpretations, escape history, transcend the historical realities of his time, place, and human limitations, making his own mark in literature, as well as in the British Theatre.

With other findings, we stress here that Wesker employs the Shylock phenomenon as a kind of projection of inequality, injustice, and hypocrisy not only against the Jews in the UK but also against himself as a Jewish playwright. As Shakespeare and his Shylock can be subject to a wide array of interpretations, Wesker's Shylock and his literary input will continue to need further research and exploration.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank Albatool Alamri, whose patience, immense support, insightful comments, and assistance with the manuscript editing and formatting have been invaluable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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