

# The New Exploration to *The Merchant of Venice*\*

Wensheng Deng

Dept. of Foreign Languages, Beijing Institute of Petrol-chemical Technology, China

Yan Wu

Dept. of Foreign Languages, Beijing Institute of Petrol-chemical Technology, China

**Abstract**—The authors of the thesis hold that Shylock, one of the key characters of *The Merchant of Venice* written by William Shakespeare, is the scapegoat of anti-Zionism in Britain at the time, for Shakespeare, was first influenced by Christian background of his own; second, by his contemporaries at home, and third, by the anti-Zionism in European Continent abroad as well. Furthermore, Shakespeare, as a realist dramatist with sharp sense, could hardly transcend the historical ideology, and Shylock would inevitably become the sacrifice to the ideology. Finally, the authors put forward that, as a humanist, Shylock is subversive to the dominant society, which can be regarded as a prelude to other four Shakespearian classics of tragedies.

**Index Terms**--*The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock, scapegoat, subversiveness

## I. INTRODUCTION

Shylock, one of the key characters in *The Merchant of Venice* written by Shakespeare, is a hot topic argued by critics of Shakespeare, who have had different opinions all the time. Till the present time, the debates about Shylock are generally put into three kinds: The first one of the ideas is negative, the second is tragic, and the third dual. The negative thinks that Shylock is a greedy usurer, who lives on interests, so he deserves to be cursed; the tragic holds that “the whole play is covered with tense anti-Zionism. Throughout the play, the prejudices against Jews can be felt as everybody who has eyes can. Shylock, as a Jew, is tragic indeed... He is doomed to be a loser in Christian court of legislation; his sword of revenge failed to thrust Antonio in the least but himself severely.” (Zheng, 1995, p.62) And others agree that Shylock’s end is tragic “because his daughter Jessica is eloped with her lover, and Shylock lost his wealth and behaved crazily; he is horrible to the extreme for he could not wait to revenge any longer, who looked exactly like an angry butcher with a newly sharpened axe towards his animal. It was sympathetic for him to be converted to Christian, and to lose his daughter and fortune. As a strong-willed man, Shylock tries to defend sincerely his equal rights on politics, economics and law only to meet his tragic end.”(Zhang, 1996, p.56) For the tragic school of Shylock, they think that the conflicts between Judaism and Christianity are attributed to the tragedy; and Shylock’s conversion is not only a personal tragedy but his racial one as well. As to the dualists, they are mixture of the negative and the tragic, i.e. Shylock is both pitiable and negative. The authors of the thesis hold that the three classifications are too rough and sketchy, which simply inherited the legacy of Hegel’s methodology, a German philosopher, who is said to be the first advocate of the divisions, i.e. positive, negative, and dual. So the labels of Shakespearian characters are easy to lead to criticism of Shakespearian critics. Anixter, a Russian literary critic, is just one of the critical voices. He remarked, “It’s quite contradictory to Shakespeare that we classify Shakespearian characters into negative or positive; for Shakespeare, all his characters are multi-faced and characterized vividly...”(Anixter, 1955, p.55). And Pushkin, a Russian poet, even directly points out that Shakespearian characters are multiple dimensional (Morozov, 1987, p.65). Hence the tag divisions of Shakespearian characters are inappropriate. Based on the opinions mentioned above, the thesis is going to explore Shylock again.

## II. THE ORIGIN OF EUROPEAN PLAY

The European play derives from the sacrificial rituals in ancient Greece. Jane Ellen Harrison, an English scholar of anthropology, made convincing analyses of the birth of the play in her article, entitled to “*Ancient Art and Ritual*”. First, she analyzes the Greek words “drama” and “dromenon” by comparison. She thinks that it’s not just coincident that the two words are similar to each other in etymology. Second, borrowing from the abundant materials in *The Golden Bough* written by James George Fraser, an English anthropologist, she has traced further back to the yearly sacrificial rituals in ancient Egypt and Babylon, boarding on the religious performance of ancient Greece. And so she comes to a conclusion: The ancient art and ritual are born from the same impulse of human instinct and are supplement and complement respectively, so they are both subjective expressions of emotion by imitating actions (Ye, (ed.), 2011, p. 28~36). And Northrop Frye, a Canadian literary critic, holds that the factors occurred repeatedly in literary works are not created by writers’ personal talent but traditions in literary development. And the factors are something called “archetypes”. “An

---

\* The paper is sponsored by the Literary Group of Dept. of Foreign Languages of BIPT.

archetype functions not only as a player of united category but also a part and parcel in literary forms.... Studying literary history, we can see that, literature, as an organic system, is rooted in primitive culture. The primary literary form is necessarily trailed back to the religious ceremonies, myths and legends from the time immemorial on.” And the play, as one of the earliest primary performance of literary forms, descends from “the religious ceremonies, myths and legends from the time immemorial on”, according to Frye (Ye, (ed.), 2011, p.13~14).

There were sacrificial rituals practiced widely in the areas, such as Greece, Egypt, Babylon, etc, during ancient times, in which human civilization was in its early childhood. In the areas there was a specific sacrificial ritual, which was a must every year. In Ancient Egypt, it's to offer sacrifices to its God Osiris; in Ancient Greece it is to offer sacrifices to God Adonis; in Ancient Babylonian area old Jewish peoples offer sacrifices to their God Tammuz. Though the names and rites of the sacrifice are different and diversified, their intentions are identical to each other, that is to say, they pray for a good harvest next year by making use of the rites to imitate the process of the growth, withering and cycle of crops. For ancient people, they believe that everything is spiritual. And they think that everything under the sun, like the phenomena of nature, for example, rain, wind, thunder, lightning, birth or death, and the like, is predominantly controlled by some divine spirits. That is why ancient peoples regularly hold lots of sacrificial rites to their God or Goddess to expel the evils and to get a good harvest of crops every year. Actually, their sacrifices are simply signified a pretty strong yearning for pleasant life. In *The Golden Bough*, there records a lot of similar rites over the world as well. And the rites have evolved into a formula as the subsequent ones: birth—death--revival, birth--half dying--death, birth--death substitute--scapegoat (Fraser, 1996, p.405~459).

There are lots of myths, legends, customs and traditions about scapegoat spread widely among the peoples over the world. The earliest recordings about the scapegoat can be found in *Genesis* (22:16) and *Leviticus* (14, 16) of *The Old Testament*. The central points of the story in *Genesis* (22:16) are the following:

Some time later God tested Abraham. He asked Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, to the region of Moriah and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains he would tell him about. Early next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” replied Abraham. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for burnt offering?”

Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to stop him. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said, “Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from your son, your only son.”

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He took it and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.<sup>1</sup>

In *The Golden Bough* and *The Devil's Lawyer* (both books are written by Fraser) there records abundant stories or folklore like the scapegoat. *The Golden Bough* has lots of recordings of witchcraft and sacrifice in different regions over the world. One of the most influential sacrifices, which is sacrificed to God Adonis in Ancient Asia and the Middle East, is described in detail. And then, he concluded that: The witchcraft, sacrifice and the like are closely connected with human survivals; and the sacrifice is substituted by a kind of performance in the developments of civilization. So Fraser's recordings, which are most influential in the school of myth-archetype, have convincingly proved the conclusion, i.e. a play is born from the sacrificial rituals. However, the other book *The Devil's Lawyer* has enough to say the protective intentions of the sacrificial offerings: for instance, goat, chicken, fish, and pig, etc, used as sacrificial offerings to replace the charged, the crimes and offence done by the charged are said to transfer to the offerings. And the charged is protected and freed from some kind of punishment.<sup>2</sup> In Ancient China there are customs and sacrificial rituals too, which a young boy or girl is sacrificed to the River God to pray for safety and security. Fortunately in the end, the boy or girl is substituted by the Three Offerings, i.e. cattle, goat and pig. We find that all the rites are identical to one extent or another, that is, a goat or other animal is used as offerings to substitute the criminal's offence to free from the punishment upon him. Though the rituals are a little bit different over the world cultures, the intention, process and essential are identical. The authors of the paper hold that the phenomena of the rites, in a way, are embodied the cultural universality. That is why we can see so many identical rites among the peoples over the world. And they are transcribed or transfigured more or less, which are no easy for modernists to discern in the world literatures, especially in classics or masterpieces. There are some cases in point, such as *King Oedipus* written by Sophocles, a drama-writer in Ancient Greece, *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, *The Flies* by French writer Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Desire Under the Elms* by American play-writer O'Neill, and *The Judgment* by Czech writer Kafka. We know that the tragedy *King*

<sup>1</sup> Here the quotations are taken from *Holy Bible*, New International Version, Hong Kong: International Bible Society, July, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Here the authors have referred to *The Devil's Lawyer*, written by James George Fraser, Beijing: Oriental Publishing House, 1998, p.1~3.

*Oedipus* is ended by King Oedipus' exile, who stabbed his eyes himself to subside the plague in Thebe; *Hamlet* ends in the Prince Hamlet's death with his opponents, who fulfilled his revenge for his father in the end; *The Flies* mainly tells a story about Agamemnon, a commander-in-chief of the Greek Allies, whose death led to a series of revenges; *The Desire Under the Elms* tells the story of Ebon, who slew his father and married his mother; *The Judgment* describes a story, in which a father demands his son to drown immediately, and the son followed his father's command and did commit suicide by throwing himself into a river...; Of course we could easily find more works whose plot is different. As for the works' plots mentioned above, we can come to a modal from their diversified plots: the modal is "birth – death substitute or criminal substitute", i.e. kind of transfigured versions of scapegoat format. Central characters' death functions as a substitute in the works. Hence, we regard the central characters as a scapegoat.

### III. SHYLOCK AS A SCAPEGOAT

In the first part we discussed the origin of the European play, which has derived from the sacrificial rituals, and the formula of scapegoat, the vital of the rites. Boarding on the platform of the scapegoat, we can see Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* more clearly. For the better studies of Shylock, we roughly outline the plot of the play as the following.

Bassanio, a noble but poor Venetian, asks his friend Antonio, a rich merchant, for three thousand ducats to enable him to prosecute fittingly his suit of the rich heiress Portia at Belmont. Antonio, whose money is all employed in foreign ventures, undertakes to borrow the sum from the Shylock, a Jewish usurer, whom has been wont to upbraid for his extortions. Shylock consents to lend the sum against a bond by which, if the sum is not repaid at the appointed day, Antonio shall forfeit a pound of flesh. In the end, Shylock was forced to turn Christian and make over his property on his death to his daughter Jessica, who has run away and married a Christian and been disinherited; to which Shylock has to agree.

As we know that Jews believe their only God—Jehovah, the Christian conversion to Shylock is a disaster like a bolt over his head, which is not only a personal insult but also a blasphemy against Jewish peoples. The conversion is also exposed to the severe conflicts between Judaism and Christianity, which signifies the prevailing anti-Semites of the age in Britain. And Shakespeare, confined as a realist drama-writer, could not escape from the social currents of ideology inevitably. So it is no wonder that Shylock, a Jewish usurer, is taken as the natural scapegoat of the history.

We hold that Shakespeare's family background is a direct dimension which has impacted his prejudice against Jews. First, Shakespeare is born in a Christian family, whose parents must have imbued him with Christianity. Because Judaism and Christianity have been controversial since Christianity was born, the two religious sects were opponents each other for their doctrines, especially after Christianity had been legitimized by Roman Emperor; the conflicts have lasted more 1, 500 years until Shakespeare's time. Second, because the social ideology of his times is dominated by the only religion—Christianity (Tong, 1982, p.89-91), it is understandable that he is baptized to be a Christian three days after his birth. During his growth he goes to church and prays to Jesus like his fellow Christians. From his childhood on William has begun to recite some passages excerpted from *Proverbs*, *The Prayer's Book*, and *The New Testament*, which have fed him with much food to ingenious imagination. "The ceremonies, morning and evening pray, holy meals, baptism, services and the like in Holy Trinity Church have impressed in his mind, and are expressed in his plays." (Shoenbaum, 1977, p.59) We may safely say that the church bells, music, and the beautiful psalms have encouraged him to be a play-writer. Anthropologists think that child memory plays a key role in fostering the outlook of the world in the future. So does Shakespeare's occurrences in childhood to him as well. Though Shakespeare has come to further understand the life, society in his living and writing, who has even conceived a concept of equality and freedom with the rise of the Renaissance over Europe, and because he is surrounded by the religious society, which is filled with church and the Cross, it is hard for us to admit that he has no religious prejudice against the Judaism in his drama writings.

Besides the family background, *The Merchant of Venice* is affected by British contemporaries, including the theme, plot and hero. As we mentioned above, the anti-Zionism adopted as a theme, which has been presented in play-writing by other play-writers in Britain, has existed for a long time. The previous fellow writers' works will foreshadow Shakespeare, i.e. borrowing or imitating other fellow men of letters, which is good tradition among British writers. In 1579, i.e. 17 years ahead of performing *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), there was a play on show, which "set forth the greediness of worldly choosers, and the bloody minds of usurers". There are some similarities between the 1579-play and *The Merchant of Venice*, especially both of which have represented Jew's characters vividly; both of the plays are almost identical in plot. Annette T. Rubinstein, an American literary critic, remarked that "the casket-plot and the pound of flesh were already combined in one play" (Rubinstein, 1988, p.32). And there is another play-writer Christopher Marlow, Shakespeare's contemporary, who created *The Jews of Malta*, which was successfully put on show in 1589, whose hero is called Barabas. Hence, Marlow will influence Shakespeare, or vice versa. We can make a rough comparison between Barabas and Shylock to see them better: First, both Barabas and Shylock are rich Jewish usurers, avaricious for wealth and are intoxicated by the magic power of money; second, both of them are bloody-hearted and eager avengers. Thirdly, in *The Jews of Malta*, Marlow set Barabas's conflicts against the political struggles, economical crisis, religious prejudices and racial disputes to characterize his character, so did *The Merchant of Venice* to Shylock. Undoubtedly, there are "some other now forgotten similar pieces" between the two plays (Rubinstein, 1988, p.32).

Therefore, in Shakespeare's time, the other play, such as Marlow's, of this period, "at which we take a particular look has, partly for extraneous reasons, become one of the most controversial of Shakespeare's works." The inaccurate but frequent use of the term "a Shylock" for avaricious or heartless person, and the stereotype of a sadistic Jewish money lender are well known to many who have never read or seen *The Merchant of Venice* (Rubinstein, 1988, p.32). If we take a glance over from 1579 to 1596, we know that there are at least three plays performed in public, whose themes are centralized around Jewish usurers, which indicates the anti-Zionism is long lasted and dominant ideology related to history and political affairs. After we have taken the historical background, Shakespeare's contemporaries' works, social ideologies into our account, we see that Shakespeare has learnt, borrowed, or imitated others' theme, characters, plot, materials and settings, he is an apprentice in his early career of writing. He, as a great play writer of realism, has inherited and applied literary traditions to his best efforts. And *The Merchant of Venice* is one typical example of his early career on literary stage, which has reflected the social ideologies. However, he is confined to the history and society, and hasn't transcended them; he has still started to make his voice of protest against the reality heard. His voices of protest are not shown perfectly until in his four classics of pure tragedy, i.e. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*.

The anti-Zionism of the age has also plunged Shakespeare into the abyss of the racial prejudice. It is known to us that European countries have prevailed the policy of anti-Semite since the Middle Ages. There are various laws to restrict Jew's activity among the major European countries. And the 13<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the peak of the laws and the policies employed wildly. The living conditions for Jews are going down from bad to worse; they have no choice but to be money-lender or trades of medical practice. That is the root of reason that Shylock is a usurer in *The Merchant of Venice*. And there is a celebrity named Martin Luther, a forerunner of religious reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whose speech and act have connected with the anti-Semite. One of Luther's works, entitled to *Jew and Lies* written in 1543, is full of the attacks against Jews (Luo, 2003, p.73), whose attacks are fuel added to the anti-Zionism both in Germany and other European countries. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century anti-Zionism spread over European Continent, especially Western Europe. Because of the English Channel, Great Britain has much less Jews than other European country in the Continent has. Nevertheless, after several hundred years of immigration and the Diaspora in the Middle Ages, Jews can be seen here and there over British Isles. Until Shakespearean times, there is prevailing anti-Semite in England just at its full play. What's worse, a murder has turned into a fuse of the anti-Zionists. The abortive murder, taken place in 1594, which is only two years early ahead of the completion of *The Merchant of Venice*, is a great shock in London. It is said that a wealthy Spanish Jewish doctor, named Lopez, who had been instigated by Spanish King, was charged against murdering Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain. Worse is that Spain and Great Britain are opponents each other at the time, who have waged wars, especially in marine to struggle for overseas colonies. One of the decisive wars, which even is recorded in world history, is the Invincible Warship of Spain was destroyed by British navy in 1588. So the murder, though abortive, is the right excuse to put him on the gallows with massive curses. It seems that the murderer is put to death, and the case is also taken granted to be over. But no, a wild anti-Semite wave is surging throughout the whole London after the murder. What makes us be worthy of further thinking is why such a case turns into a fuse to lead to anti-Zionism against the Jewish race. Undoubtedly, there are religious causes behind the wave, which has everything to be tied up with the European anti-Zionism. In Europe Jews have been suffered from all kinds of crimes given to them and been regarded as poor scapegoats by vast majority of the governments. Even an unimportant offence, which might be done by careless Jews, would directly bring about the attacks or protests of the social walks. Let alone the governments would ignore of the murder of Lopez. Under the anti-Zionist's circumstance at its peak, it is impossible for Shakespeare to stand alone to see the riots against anti-Semites on street in London. Certainly, he is involved into the movement and puzzled by the movement. And as a realist play-writer with sense, Shakespeare could not turn a blind an eye or a deaf ear to the murder and riots at the time, which are great materials for his play-writing. Or he "would likely represent the Spanish doctor's characters. Undoubtedly, on stage the central character Shylock of *The Merchant of Venice* reminds William's audiences of the horrible doctor Lopez." In reality, basing on many aspects, the thoughtful spectators of *The Merchant of Venice* can find that Shylock indicates Lopez. For instance, in Act IV, Scene I of *The Merchant of Venice*, Gratiano, a friend of Antonio in the play, curses that Shylock is merciless and evil-hearted like a wolf.

*Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,  
To hold opinion with Pythagoras  
That souls of animals infuse themselves  
Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit  
Governed a wolf who, hanged for human slaughter,  
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,  
And whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,  
Infused itself in thee; for thy desires,  
Are wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous.* (Act IV, Scene I) (emphasis added)

And even there are some scholars of Shakespearean studies, who said that Shakespeare probably has given hints at the Spaniard, Doctor Lopez, because the name Lopez, borrowed from Latin word "Lupus", means "wolf", the same meaning with English word "wolf" (Wang, 1999, p.103-5). So the performance of *The Merchant of Venice* at the time

would add fuel to the current anti-Zionism. Or otherwise, some other Shakespearian scholars think that the play could also be a satire or an irony to the reality, through which he shows his sympathy to Shylock. If the interpretation is reasonable and convincing, Shakespeare's play can be regarded as a tool to express his anger or dissent to the anti-Zionism. Whatever the interpretations are, it is hard for us to take them for granted today. And the uncertainty is kind of "blank spots or empty space" in literary text, which is like the empty-space-leaving technique intentionally used to arouse spectators' imagination in Chinese ink painting, and so is *The Merchant of Venice*. The blank spot or empty space is an appeal or a call to readers as well as clue to reader's imagination, which are looking forward to reader's interpreting; the blank spots or empty space could be called "silent spots" to be confirmed by later readers. We can't transcend the historical valley to catch what Shakespeare intends to express by returning to his times. What we have talked about his ideas today probably is only a drop of his oceanic connotation or denotation after over 400 years. No wonder, Goldman, a French thinker and critic, said that a classic lies in its silent spots.

George Lukacs, a Hungarian Marxist literary critic, claims that totality is a dialectical, historical method to remark a work. We may make use of the concept of the totality to study Shylock as well. Here, the totality has at least two meanings; first, we should set Shylock in the web of *The Merchant of Venice*, which is supposed to be seen as an organic system, seen in both synchronic and diachronic system, including others' works concerned with Jewish usurers, accidents, background, history, political affairs, in brief, anything related to Shylock but Shakespeare's works; second, the studies of Shylock should be associated with Shakespeare's complete works so that we may see Shylock in the Gallery of Shakespearian characters, by contrast and comparison. Taken from "the totality" of Shakespeare, Shylock could be seen as a mouth organ substitute for Shakespeare to express his angry voices; and we can see that Shakespeare takes pity on Shylock because his representation of the racial prejudices against Jews is an exposition to the dark side of the British society, or a kind of muckraking. In fact, the exposition or muckraking is subversive to the ruling class. Stephen Greenblatt, the leading proponent of American New Historicism, said that the three of Spenser, Marlow and Shakespeare are singing songs for rebellion and turn to subversive, apparent docility (Zhu, 2009, p.403). The remarks indicate that their works keep up with the social ideology of the times apparently; but on the hand, they are subversive, whose works reveal the writers' rebel and challenge against the specific ideology of the times. Consequently, we may take Shylock as one of Shakespearian images to oppose the anti-Zionism. In Act I, Scene III, making use of Shylock, Shakespeare has expressed his fury about the prejudices:

...he hath disgrac'd me, and hinder'd me half a million, laugh'd at my losses, mock'd at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies, and what's his reason? I am a Jew: 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 disease, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is: if you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we like you in the rest, we resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility, revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example, why revenge! The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. (Act III, Scene I)

The denunciation from Shylock's mouth reveals Shakespeare's wrath and protest against the anti-Zionists as well his appeal to humanitarian equality, which shows his pity to Shylock, a victim of the racial prejudices. Up to the modern times, because of Jews' continuous miseries and disasters in human history, mercy and sympathy are easily tended to give Jews. So, Shylock, as a forerunner image of suffered Jews, is given more sympathy than before, for instance, the film *The Merchant of Venice* produced in USA in 2004, which expresses a sympathetic attitude to Shylock.<sup>3</sup> Though Shylock wins our pitiful tears, seen from the total system of Shakespeare's works, such subversive heroes depicted more vividly can't be perfect till in Shakespeare's four classics of pure tragedy in his latter writing period.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Shakespeare's dualistic features, which he is both a feudalist with strong religious sense and a humanist, determine his attitude to depict Shylock; on one hand Shylock is characterized as the scapegoat of the racial prejudices to defend the ruling class's ideology; on the other hand he shows his great sympathy to Shylock's surroundings. By observing Shylock, we readers can see clearly the social walks of life of the times; bloody, greedy people may be suffered unfair treatments; but sometimes, good and just men might do something ungraceful because of selfishness, which provide us with realistic pictures of the reality. It is Shakespeare's multiple dimensional explorations to his heroes that his characterizations of characters are life-like, and thought-provoking, such as Hamlet, Falstaff, King Lear, Macbeth, Timon, etc, who are types of literary images in the history of world literature. And in the later period of his pure tragedies, Shakespeare has thrown off his apparent docility and made fury to rebuke the dark sides of the times.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Zheng, Xiaoqin. (1995). A Trial Analysis of Shylock, *Leshan Normal College Journal*, (3), 62.
- [2] Zhang, Ziren. (1996). On the Tragic Connotations of Shylock, *Guangxi University Journal*, (1), 56.
- [3] Anixter, A. (1955). *British Literary Outline*. Beijing: The People's Literary Publishing House.

<sup>3</sup> The authors hold that the film *The Merchant of Venice* produced in USA in 2004 takes a sympathetic attitude to Shylock for his sufferings.

- [4] Morozov. (1987). On Shakespeare. Beijing: The Press of Culture and Art.
- [5] Ye, Shuxian. (ed.). (2011). Myth-archetype Theory and Criticism. Xian: Shanxi Normal University Publishing Group.
- [6] Fraser, James. (1996). The Golden Bough. London: Penguin Books.
- [7] Tong, Qingsheng. (1982). Brief Analysis of the Religious Prejudices in The Merchant of Venice, *Nanjing Normal University Journal (social sciences)* (4), 89~91.
- [8] Shoenbaum, S. (1977). The Life of Shakespeare. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [9] Rubinstein, Annette T. (1988). The Great Tradition in English Literature, Volume I. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [10] Luo, Henglin. (2003). Jew and Lie, *World History* (4), 73.
- [11] Wang, Shuwen. (1999). On Multiple Shylock, *Foreign Literature Studies* (3), 103-5.
- [12] Zhu, Liyuan. (2009). Western Contemporary Literary Theory. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press.

**Wensheng Deng**, born in Anhua County of Hunan Province of China in 1967, received his M.A. in literature from Central South University, China, in 2002, and was further trained his academics at Harding University of U.S.A. from 2007 until 2008. And now, he is Associate Professor of Anglo-American literature in Dept. of Foreign Languages, Beijing Institute of Petrol-chemical Technology, China. His studies cover Comparative Literature, Translation Studies and Politics.

Mr. Deng is a member of the Chinese Association of Foreign Language Teachers. And he has published more than thirty papers related with literature, translation, politics, and the like.

**Yan Wu**, born in Xiangtan City of Hunan Province of China in 1961, is Associate Professor of English in Dept. of Foreign Languages, Beijing Institute of Petrol-chemical Technology, China. And she got her Ph.D. at Renmin University of China. Her research interests mainly include western language theory, language culture, and EFL teaching in Chinese context.