



World Scientific News

WSN 90 (2017) 166-176

EISSN 2392-2192

***Othello* and the Gaze of the Other**

Roohollah Roozbeh

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities,
Vali-e-Ars University of Rafsanjan, 22 Bahman Square, Rafsanjan, Iran

E-mail address: r.roozbeh@vru.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

This article reads *Othello* through the discourse of cultural materialism. To do so, the writer's discourse therefore, becomes that of the hysterical discourse going against the dominant discourse of the work. Cultural materialism borrows the ideas of many critics in order to study canonical works against the grain. Thus, this article uses cultural materialism in order to read *Othello* against the grain. To read it so requires resisting or hystericising the dominant discourse and worldview and shifting sympathy. The gaze of *Othello* signifies how psychologically the white society looked at him and how the white society considered him. *Othello* is Moorish and hence an Arab in Europe, manifestly calling to mind all the multifaceted confrontations and conflicts of Self/Other in a framework of power struggle. He is a non-western protagonist whose wife, a European equals *Othello's* tribe. *Othello* is an odd-one-out protagonist whose wife, Desdemona, is referred to as a pearl. This pearl calls for the fact that *Othello* be black in order to be inferior to her. The white Desdemona is an angel while the black *Othello* is a monster creating a binary opposition of angel and evil. The play depicts *Othello* as a loser and Desdemona as a winner making the audience identify with the winner. It makes *Othello* a type, the type of people who are horrible, treacherous, illogical, bestial and demonic. Desdemona also becomes a type, the type of people who are self, angelic and master. Practically Shakespeare lets *Othello* confess to his irrationality and inferiority.

Keywords: gaze, *Othello*, discourse, master, other

1. INTRODUCTION

The term gaze is a psychoanalytical phrase made famous by Jacques Lacan. It is used to define the apprehensive state that comes with the consciousness that one can be observed. Lacan believes that when a person apprehends that he or she is a noticeable object he or she psychologically loses his/her self-confidence and a degree of autonomy. (Lacan, 1978) The gaze of the other is used for people who are being viewed as inferior, demented backward and illogical. Edward Said in his book "orientalism", used the term "post-colonial gaze" to illuminate the connection that colonial powers protracted to societies of colonized countries. (22)

In this article I try to examine the theory of *objet a* as 'the gaze of the other, which is a key concept of cultural materialism. I apply this theory specifically in relation to *Othello*. I focus on the figure of the oppressed as the traditional figure exemplifying *Other* in white societies, a figure that is gazed constantly by the superior European and has lost his self-confidence and his degree of autonomy. Both excessive and deficient, the sub-textual (absent) presence of *other* in *Othello* will be of great interest, and I propose to theorize the function of the *other* in *Othello*. To apply this theory to the present article requires going through the discourse of the master, to dig it, scrutinize it and show its gaps and shortcomings. This discourse is among the four main discourses which Lacan, the French psychoanalyst, distinguishes.

Lacan contends that there are four central types of discourses. Discourse of the Master, discourse of the University, discourse of the Hysteric, discourse of the Analyst. (Wilson, 1995:122) The first one refers to the discourse of the kings which dominates the past up to the enlightenment period. This discourse is all about kings and their actions and deeds. Lacan says that history has been the place of kings. It is all about them. But after the enlightenment the discourse of the master gives place to the discourse of the university as the enlightenment was the predominance of science and knowledge. With the growth of knowledge, literacy was available to everyone and due to this growth of knowledge, feudalism had nothing to offer and middle class had the chance to express itself and kings and queens were dethroned and abolished.

Out of the growth of knowledge the subjects began to doubt the history and went against its representation. They read the history against the grain. They did not sympathize with the kings anymore. This leads us to the discourse of hysterics the third of Lacan's four fundamental types of discourse. This is the discourse of the subjects reading against past and its kings and princes. Cultural materialism is of this type of discourse. The fourth type of discourse is the discourse of the analyst who examines the analysand and refers to psychoanalysis. These four types of discourses are drawn upon by the proponents of cultural materialism in their discussion of literary works. In *Othello* these types of discourses are related in our discussion of it through the lens of cultural materialism. The discourse of the master finds expression in the frame story itself which if analyzed from the point of view of new historicism and cultural materialism calls into play the discourse of the hysterics, since this reading of *Othello* is a resisting reading and becomes the discourse of the hysterics which challenges, questions and undermines the discourse of the master. To do so requires the analysis of the *other* for whom this new-historicism-oriented study will be speaking. Therefore the gaze of the other and the tradition of the oppressed are the two theses of cultural

materialism, which if applied to *Othello*, will unavoidably uncover the many layers of power relations.

2. DISCUSSION

I began with the desire to speak with the dead.
(Greenblatt, 1990:1)

This sentence opens Stephen Greenblatt's book *Shakespearean Negotiations*, (1988) and captures a great deal of New Historicism and cultural materialism. This sentence shows him establishing a certain familiarity with the dead voices of the past. This has been the job of critics of New Historicism to create a sort of intimacy with the dead voices of the past in their studies of canonical works of literature. The present writer, therefore, wishes to create his own intimacy with the voices of the past in regards with a canonical work called *Othello* to represent him again and to retell his story once more. This topic, thus so far unexplored, will study the gaze of the other and will reiterate the voices of others and the tradition of the oppressed. Therefore in what follows in this discussion, Othello one of the protagonists of William Shakespeare will be examined as an example of an *Other*. The reason for this lies in the fact that Othello is an odd-one-out protagonist in a society in which he is not considered a respectful person and is spoken about as an inferior person, as a black ram or rather as an *Other*. The poet who depicts the life of such a black protagonist in a community of white people so as to *other* him depicts the ideology of his time. That is the story of Othello by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare considered Othello's race when he depicted Othello's life. But critics are willing to pay no attention to Othello's race. Many critics have long accepted the well-known critical postulation that Shakespeare's plays portray not the particularities but the essentials of the human circumstance. A.C. Bradley for example, declares that "in regard to the essentials of his character" Othello's race is inconsequential, and that Shakespeare would have laughed if anyone had congratulated him on "the accuracy of his racial psychology."(167) Robert Heilman names *Othello* a "drama about Everyman, with the modifications necessary to individualize him."(139) Harold Clarke Goddard holds that Othello is "neither a Negro nor a Moor" but "any man who is more beautiful within than he is without."(81) Jane Adamson argues that Othello's Moorish-ness "matters only in so far as it is part of a much larger and deeper" issue-the distinction in life between "the 'fated' and the 'free' aspects of the self."(7-8) F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot treat Othello's moral flaws as universals. The weight of critical tradition, then, presents a Shakespeare who finds racial and cultural difference insignificant and who assimilates his Moor into the "human" condition.

However we are going, on technical matters, to prove that Shakespeare intentionally *others* Othello. We are going to demonstrate that racial issues do matter to Shakespeare. He promotes Othello by making him the protagonist and then badly demotes him to implicitly say Othello is not worth heroism and is not worthy of heroic action. Considering the whereabouts of Othello and considering his being at the heart of Europe, we will see that Othello is in fact like a fish out of water. He is an immigrant and not belonging to Europe. This fact unavoidably brings forth the racial issues. How can he be a protagonist in such a center in which all are of the same color but he is not? Considering the bulk of bad language used in the play against othello's character, we are going to conclude that the choice of Othello as a

protagonist is intentional on the part of Shakespeare so as to prove something about or to naturalize what is being said about one race. At the time of Shakespeare racial problems were significant. The European did not consider African as noble but as savages. Therefore it is not logical to make Othello noble first and then a protagonist unless there is an intention. In order for Othello to be a protagonist, he should be very famous and well-off. The tragic hero, as Aristotle says, should be a noble person `one who is highly renowned and prosperous- a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families` (Hall,1963: 8). Tragic heroes who appear in the dramatic works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, Marston, Corneille, Racine, and many other playwrights are all such highly renowned and aristocratic characters. They include Oedipus, Atreus, Agamemnon, Aegisthus, Orestes, Phèdre, Hamlet, Lear, and Macbeth, to name a few. Is it possible to have another one added to the above list of protagonists of the European literature?

All of Shakespeare's tragic heroes are highly-known and prosperous like Hamlet who is the son of Denmark's King, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony, Coriolanus. One of his protagonists is different from the list of his protagonists, that one is Othello. Othello is not a hero at all but a person who should not be even a common person at the heart of Europe. What is significant is that Shakespeare does not bring a tragic hero from the common people to the world of tragedy because he might have thought that only members of the aristocratic classes had ability to suffer harm serious enough to be worthy of dramatic re-enactment. Also in the world of comedy despite the fact that Aristotle had said comedy is about lower people, we see Shakespeare does not bring lower people but over again aristocratic characters. If we take a look at Shakespeare's comedies we see that his comedies valorize over again aristocratic people. Taking a look at the cast of characters of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, we see Duke Frederick, Rosalind, Celia, Duke Senior, Jaques, and Amiens. Although it is a comedy, the characters of this comedy do not belong to the common people but they are all from aristocratic class. The same is true about *Two Gentlemen from Verona*. Valentine, Proteus, Silvia, Julia, Duke of Milan and Antonio are all from the noble class of society. The world of Shakespeare's comedies is full of such characters as Cymbeline, Cloten, Imogen, Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, Demetrius, Lysander, Hermia, Helena, Viola, Sebastian, Orsino, Olivia, Ferdinand and Berowne to name a few. All characters of his comedies are kings, Dukes, countesses, lords and so on and so forth despite the fact that comedy is about lower people.

Othello as protagonist fits neither a tragedy nor a comedy of William Shakespeare. He is estranged from Venetian society; he is a "wheeling stranger" who does not have any stable home for himself. Therefore we are facing a real contradiction in *Othello*. How can Shakespeare create a type of humanity when all of his protagonists come from Europe. In order not be accused of racism Shakespeare should have created different heroes from different groups, countries and ethnicities, from China, from Arabs, from Native Americans and so on and so forth. When all of his heroes are westerners we should be on our guards. We cannot accept his being not racist in *Othello*.

We have no other choice except to study *Othello* just in terms of race alone. It is totally in the context of race that *Othello* is meaningful. To understand *Othello* in terms of race we have to ask ourselves certain questions. Why did Shakespeare choose a black protagonist for his tragedy of the same name? Why is Othello's tragic flaw jealousy and not greed, or other kingly tragic flaws? Why is Desdemona worth Othello's tribe? These are the questions that lead us to study Othello in the context of race. The fact that Desdemona is a pearl requires that Othello be black in order to play the function of a foil for a white person. The black one is a

monster white the white one is an angel. In the play Shakespeare gives a demonic picture of Othello who is lascivious, pigheaded and illogical. The act of jealousy is fitted to an illogical person than to a logical one, Shakespeare might have thought. This is interesting to know that in the time of Shakespeare European actually looked at other races as if the other races were illogical, jealous, demented, backward and awkward.

Jealousy is not a great tragic flaw for a European protagonist, it is a small insignificant tragic flaw. Therefore it should not fit people of Europe. If the character of Othello were a white one, the fall of that character would not be worth dramatization. What is important is that this tragic flaw does not fit a white European man rather it fits someone who is not a European. In this play there should be a man and a woman as there are. But the point is that the one should be black the other should be white. Therefore we face the binary opposition white and black. The white one is a pearl which is worth the black one's tribe. The word tribe is a very great point for our discussion here because it was used by European for other people who have nomadic culture who moves from place to place as Othello is a wheeling stranger.

Bringing a black man and a white woman in matrimony is naturally incorrect, the play suggests. The play shows that miscegenation of Othello and Desdemona is certainly a failure and Shakespeare is going to teach a lesson to his readers as to we should not let a white woman marry a black man because the result of it is certainly a failure.

Another evidence is that Shakespeare is going to say in a marriage of black with white it is very simple and *natural* (italic mine) to apportion the blame. The black should be blamed. As we see in this tragedy that Shakespeare creates Othello in such a way as to blame him completely and entirely.

Othello is the symbol of non-European. First because he is not from Europe second he is brought in the context of Europe to be compared with the self. When compared theoretically and practically, Othello's features become prominent and tangible so as for European readers to get the clue that white is superior and black is inferior. The primary readers of Othello are European readers. In the first place when a writer puts pen to paper he has a certain type of people and mostly his own countrymen in his mind as his readers. It is very logical to teach a lesson to the readers of one's country, because a poet is considered a guardian of society and an 'engineer of human soul'. Shakespeare is not universal in the first place because he has his country readers in his mind. He is considered universal because he writes about universal subject matters. Teaching jealousy and its bad effects to one's country readers does not need bringing a black protagonist from another ethnicity group and place him in the arms of a white woman. In such a way the reader learns that only in the case of a marriage in which a white woman is the wife of a black man does jealousy occur. This cannot be the purpose which Shakespeare follows in writing *Othello*. Shakespeare has something else in his mind. What he has in mind of writing *Othello* is *othering* Othello. Through Othello, Shakespeare presented an outsider in Europe. How can we come to this conclusion and assume that Shakespeare is othering Othello? It is not that much hard to justify ourselves. Let's study *Othello* in terms of Aristotle's ideas because as Abrams says 'Shakespeare's *Othello* is one of the few plays which accords closely with Aristotle's basic concepts of the tragic hero and plot(223)'. This is not true. In the first place Aristotle gives the definition of tragedy as "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself," in the medium of poetic language and in the manner of dramatic rather than of narrative presentation, involving "incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish the catharsis of such emotions." Aristotle places a great emphasis on pity. We have to pity the

protagonist because he is better than we are. What we are going to say is that Othello is not at all a hero in the first place because as in the words of Janet Adleman:

‘*OTHELLO* FAMOUSLY BEGINS NOT WITH *OTHELLO* BUT WITH *IAGO*. Other tragedies begin with ancillary figures commenting on the character who will turn out to be at the center of the tragedy-one thinks of *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*-but no other play subjects its ostensibly tragic hero to so long and intensive a debunking before he even sets foot onstage’(125).

And in the second place because the tragic hero, as Aristotle says, should be a noble person `one who is highly renowned and prosperous- a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families` (Hall, 8). According to the definition of tragic hero, Othello is not one to be included, first because he is not prosperous and second because he does not have a family. He is a fish out of water. He is a real commoner, a very remote commoner who does not fit the society of westerners. He is estranged from Venetian society as in the words of Shakespeare himself a "wheeling stranger" who does not have any stable home for himself.

There again is the question of pity and sympathy on the part of the protagonist. Do we sympathize with Othello as a protagonist at the end of the play or we feel a shift of sympathy? Shakespeare brings our hatred of Othello to the climax when Othello kills Desdemona. Every reader, every audience hates Othello when Othello commits the act of killing Desdemona. We sympathize with almost all of Shakespeare's tragic protagonists. We love Hamlet at the end of the play because Hamlet kills his uncle at the expense of his own life. He purges the garden of Denmark from the weeds while giving his own life and dies like a martyr. King Lear is loved by us because he understands the true beloved daughter is Cordellia and this understanding is equal to his mysterious dying. Macbeth is a loving hero from the beginning, his tragic flaw is greed for monarchy. He wants to be a king and kills a king to be a king. He is so great a protagonist that none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.96-97). He is killed because he has done something wrong and because he expressively turns great gifts to evil purposes and consequently deserves his destruction by his morally superior antagonists. Othello similarly commits a sin but his sin is not comparable to Macbeth's sin in that Othello commits a sin due to his jealousy not his greed. Jealousy is not comparable to greed because both jealousy and greed call into play two different people. For the former Shakespeare employs a black Moor and for the second tragic flaw he uses a great European man. The question is can we reverse the two protagonists that is to say to have the same figure as Othello as protagonist of *Macbeth* and Macbeth as the protagonist of *Othello*?. The answer is no. why? Because jealousy suits a black person more than a white person. This is the question of race.

Identification with Othello never occurs in the course of the play. The audience never loves Othello from the beginning through the middle to the end. Shakespeare brings our hatred of Othello to the climax when Othello kills Desdemona. Every reader, every audience hates Othello when Othello commits the act of killing Desdemona. In fact, the reader will hate any group of whom Othello is a representative. Truthfully art is an excellent example of pigeonholing a group of people and the severest one in that the audience will immediately believe it and it will have an indelible effect on their minds about people of whom Othello is a type. These people of whom Othello is a type, the play suggests are ugly, treacherous, illogical, bestial and demonic and good for nothing.

Shakespeare in writing *Othello* is telling us that it is not natural for two people of different races to fall in love. It is against nature the play suggests. There should be something artificial working in between to bring a white person to a black person as in the case of Othello and Desdemona. The evidence is that Brabantio ascribes Desdemona's love to witchcraft because he cannot believe that she could otherwise overcome the horror of Othello's blackness.

"and she, in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, everything,
To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!" (I.iii.96-98).

A synecdoche is being employed in the above lines. That is to say the synecdoche of part for the whole. The word 'she' in the above line is used as a synecdoche. The word 'she' refers to Desdemona who is a part of Europe who stands here for the whole Europe itself. In another word as Othello is a type, Desdemona is also a type. Othello is a type of people who are demonic from the point of view of European and Desdemona is a type of people who are self, angelic and master.

Brabantio continues

Ay, to me;
She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
For nature so preposterously to err,
Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
Sans witchcraft could not.

The illogicality and artificiality of the marriage of Desdemona to Othello is emphasized over again in the above lines. And what is significant is that Brabantio uses nature to justify himself. In fact nature is made complicit with the fact that European Desdemona is an angel and African Othello is an evil. If the marriage of Othello were not a complete fiasco, Shakespeare would be considered to be working against Brabantio's words. As we know the end of the story and the failure of the marriage, the words of Brabantio actually become the words of Shakespeare himself. And the play works in such a way as to make us understand Othello as the "natural" embodiment of Iago's "old black ram", "the devil", "Barbary horse" and "the beast with two backs", of Roderigo's "lascivious Moor" of Brabantio's "foul thief", "bond-slave and pagan" and of Emilia's "the blacker devil". Is Othello the protagonist whom we should sympathize with considering this large amount of strong language used against him? And also considering the scope of respect which Shakespeare creates for other of his protagonists in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* we are left to believe that Othello is brought in the context of Europe to be compared with a European self and an angle. What westerners preach in theory that white people should not marry black people Shakespeare practices. What European thought during the time that Europeans are superior to other races, Shakespeare practices very well.

Edward Berry is wrong when he argues "If Shakespeare depended upon Leo Africanus for such details, he must have been much more interested in "racial psychology". His interest, of course, was not anthropological in the modern sense." (317) Shakespeare is not at all

interested in humanity in Othello. If he were, he should have chosen a protagonist from Europe, like all other of his protagonists.

We need to make a distinction between the tragic flaws of his protagonists. Almost of all of Shakespeare's protagonists have great and significant tragic flaws. For example the tragic flaw of Hamlet is a philosophic one, that is to say, to come to this great recognition that he is doing the right thing after considering all potentials. This protagonist is a true European because he ponders over all things as Europeans consider themselves men of thinking. Hamlet is a man of deep thinking and deep feeling.

But the tragic flaw of Othello is jealousy. Jealousy does not fit a Western protagonist. Rather it fits somebody who is not a man of thinking and one who does not know how to love wisely. As Shakespeare himself wants Othello talk of himself as 'One that loved not wisely but too well'. The word wisely is a key word here. Othello does not know how to love wisely, in fact this is his tragic flaw. A jealous person is one who does not love his beloved wisely. If instead of Othello Shakespeare had chosen a European character, therefore, it would have been logical to argue Shakespeare's play depicts not the particularities but the essentials of the human condition.

Another example of illogicality on the part of Othello is the commitment of suicide. None of Shakespeare's protagonist kills themselves except Othello, Antony and Romeo. The case in Romeo and Antony is different. The two ones commit suicide because their beloved are seemingly dead while Othello commits suicide because he is so small. A great European protagonist does not kill himself because of killing his beloved unwisely rather he kills himself in the path of love which is considered holy. In the case of Antony and Romeo, they are martyrs of love but in the case of Othello he is an illogical Moor.

Shakespeare wants to say assimilation of any other groups of people with European people is a complete fiasco. He wants to say European should not let other groups of people enter European harem. As many say it is the case of humanity that Shakespeare depicts the essentials of human being. This is not Humanity because they did not consider other people into account let alone depicting them in their great works of art.

The surest indication of racism in *Othello* is the avoidance of Othello's name. Iago uses "the Moor" more than Othello's name. Roderigo never refers to Othello by name, calling him "the Moor" twice, "the thicklips" once. Brabantio too never uses Othello's name, nor does Emilia; the former calls him "the Moor" three times, the latter, eight. Among these characters the naming of Othello becomes an exercise in reducing the individual to a class, the person to an object.

Besides insulting a person in literature is not a universal theme and subject.

There are critics who believe that Shakespeare is dealing with human essentials like Eliot. The point is that these critics love Shakespeare and this love has made them blind. We have to remember the story of Samuel Johnson who was talking about Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare does not observe the three unities and "sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose"(2352). Johnson loves him very much. The case is true with Dryden, T.S. Eliot. These critics do not want to discuss Shakespeare in terms of race. Shakespeare's depiction of Othello is received by this critic absolutely in terms of human essentials. That is true about other critics who consider Shakespeare in terms of universalism. It is a matter of love than logic that they can't accept Shakespeare's racism in *Othello*.

On the one hand Shakespeare talks through Othello about Othello as "I fetch my life and being / From men of royal siege" (I.ii.21-22) on the other hand Shakespeare talks about Othello through Baranatio as "Down with him, thief!" "O thou foul thief, where hast thou stow'd my daughter?" A royal siege and a thief do not go together. This is a contradiction which should be solved. Either he is a thief or a royal siege. As the play continues we see in the binary opposition siege/thief it is thief which is the focal point of the play.

If Othello were a great man, the play teaches us, he would not elope with the daughter of a respectful person considering that he is all alone in a society with whose members he is as different as chalk and cheese. How can he elope with the daughter of a respectful person when he is all alone in a society in which he is as different as chalk and cheese? The play does answer this question. It is left with the readers and the critics to answer this question. It is otherization of Othello as an answer to that question. The play implicitly says Othello is a real thief.

Shakespeare's othering Othello is very intense in these very lines where Shakespeare wants Othello to say: "Haply, for I am black,/And have not those soft parts of conversation/ That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd/Into the vale of years (yet that's not much),/She's gone. I am abus'd, and my relief/That we can call these delicate creatures ours,/And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad/And live upon the vapor of a dungeon/Than keep a corner in the thing I love/For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague [of] great ones,/Prerogativ'd are they less than the base;/'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death./Even then this forked plague is fated to us/ When we do quicken. (III. iii.263-77).

The play is full of contradictions about Othello. The play calls Othello 'honest'. If he is honest, why he believes Iago very easily. An honest person does not tell lies and does not like to be told lies. He does not accept or believe everything so easily. Instead of 'honest' the play suggests Othello is gullible. Besides the play gives an example of Othello's telling lies. Andrews argues two accounts of the handkerchief exist in Othello. In the first, Othello warns Desdemona that it is a love-charm with "magic in the web," given to his mother by an Egyptian; in the second, he tells Gratiano it was "an antique token/ My father gave my mother." The word Egyptian is also problematic as Shakespeare is identifying Egyptian with sort of things as magical and mystic and hence othering Egyptian as well.

Regardless of this contradiction the handkerchief is another example of illogicality on the part of Othello.

she told her, while she kept it
'Twould make her amiable, and subdue my father
Entirely to her love: but if she lost it,
Or made a present of it, my father's eye
Should hold her loathly, and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies: she dying, gave it me,
And bid me, when my fate would have me wive
To give it her; I did so, and take heed on't,
Make it a darling, like your precious eye,
To lose, or give't away, were such perdition
As nothing else could match.(11.55-66)

What kind of a person talks like Othello. We don't see decorum in the play. A tragic protagonist should be true to life. That is to say he should act and talk like what his role is.

How can a person believe in this stuff. The play is suggesting that Othello is absolutely superstitious. Shakespeare is intentionally using foreshadowing here. 'It is a perdition' I do not know why people are including Othello in human condition. Othello is only a particular type not included in human condition intentionally by William Shakespeare. Losing a handkerchief is equal to perdition. This is intentional when we see it actually happens at the end of the play. This warning Desdemona that losing a handkerchief will bring a perdition brings to the mind of readers a kind of absolute foolishness on the part of Othello. What kind of a person will liken a handkerchief to such a foolish analogy of perdition? Certainly not a European but a black illogical person like Othello. A man kills a woman on the evidence of losing a handkerchief is not the story of a great protagonist. It calls into play a very illogical protagonist. We cannot replace Othello with King Lear, Hamlet, or any other of Shakespeare's protagonists. Even Desdemona herself understands the illogicality of Othello and does not believe in what Othello says about the handkerchief. How could she fall in love with such an illogical unreasonable person is another contradiction which William Shakespeare creates unwittingly which helps us deconstruct *Othello* very easily.

Othello in reaction of Desdemona who believes that is not possible, says

Tis true, there's magic in the web of it:
A sibyl, that had number'd in the world
The sun to make two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work;
The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk,
And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful
Conserve of maiden's hearts.

At the end of the play, however, when Othello is foolishly attempting to justify Desdemona's murder, he superstitiously refers to the proof of guilt afforded by Cassio's possession of the recognizance and pledge of love,

Which I first gave her; I saw it in his hand,
It was a handkerchief; an antique token
My father gave my mother" (V.ii.215-2 18).

Othello is actually warning Desdemona that losing handkerchief is equal to perdition.

3. CONCLUSION

To conclude this essay, critics have interpreted *Othello* in two ways, in terms of humanity and in terms of race. But it lends itself very well to the latter. When analyzed in terms of race the play loses its humanity and becomes entirely anti-humanistic. Those who interpret *Othello* in terms of humanity are either in love with Shakespeare or because they want to avoid racial discussion of Shakespeare because discussing *Othello's* race demerits Shakespeare. Shakespeare in *Othello* shows that nobility and valour are the monopoly of European race. But black is worth nothing.

The meaning of the word "black" includes a whole range of negative associations, illogicality, jealousy, foolishness, superstition and lasciviousness. In the end Shakespeare sees

Othello as a barbarian against which he defines Desdemona. The only case in which we can include Othello in the human condition is to create a successful marriage and a satisfactory matrimony. The play moves in the opposite direction and takes the side of Iago and other racist characters in the play. Everyone can come to this conclusion with the first reading. The fact that we moderns read Othello in terms of humanity is that we abolished slavery and accepted all people as humans but at the time of Shakespeare it was otherwise. Certainly Shakespeare shared the color prejudice apparent in his age.

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