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Á vos plaisirs solaires !i!

Brahima Diaby

Construing and deconstructing peace as a result of race-ridden conflicts and stereotypes in William Shakespeare's *Othello*

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Abstract:

Studies on Shakespeare's *Othello* have looked at race and ethnic issues in the play. Many scholars have also shown how race differences are dramatized in the construction of the play. in *Othello,* it is evident to see that characters oppose one another due to societal and political reasons. However, little has been said about tropes laid by the playwright in order to materialise race-ridden conflicts and suggest how peace can become a reality out of a perpetual effort and compromises. This justifies the endeavour to highlight race issues and conflicts as instruments of dramatic representation fashioned to approach the notion of peace from a different perspective. It is the purpose of this article to analyse the underlying stereotypes as clues that function to maintain the major conflicts of the play and also suggest a way to unconditional peace. The theoretical framework falls under Jacques Derrida's deconstruction built on the notion of "différance" and will treat *Othello* as a system of binary differences in which race, stereotypes and peace are aesthetically interwoven to dramatize racialisation in Tudor England.

Key Words: Tudor England, plot, peace, racism, stereotype

Résumé :

Les études sur *Othello* de Shakespeare se sont penchées sur les questions raciales et ethniques dans la pièce. De nombreux chercheurs ont également montré comment les différences raciales sont mises en scène dans la construction de la pièce. Dans *Othello*, il est évident de voir que les personnages s'opposent les uns aux autres pour des raisons sociétales et politiques. Cependant, peu a été dit sur les tropes mis en place par le dramaturge afin de matérialiser les conflits sur fond raciale et de suggérer comment la paix peut devenir un acquis à travers une

quête perpétuelle et des compromis. Cela justifie l'effort visant à mettre en lumière les questions et les conflits raciaux en tant qu'instruments de représentation dramatique façon nés pour aborder la notion de paix sous un angle différent. L'objectif de cet article est d'analyser les stéréotypes sous-jacents en tant qu'indices qui fonctionnent pour maintenir les conflits majeurs de la pièce et suggèrent également une voie vers une paix inconditionnelle. Le cadre théorique s'inscrit dans la déconstruction de Jacques Derrida construite sur la notion de "différance" et traitera Othello comme un système de différences dans lequel la race, les stéréotypes et la paix sont esthétiquement entrelacés pour mettre en scène le racisme dans l'Angleterre des Tudors.

Mots clés : Angleterre des Tudors, intrigue, paix, racisme, stéréotype

Introduction:

The purpose of this article to analyse the underlying stereotypes as dramatic clues that function to maintain the major conflicts of the play and how Shakespeare explores the tragic end of the play in order to teach humanity about peace and its quest. Beforehand, it needs be noted that Tudor England has been the scene of racial slur and injustices that have retained the attention of various writers. The racial issue in Tudor England results from the large waves of immigration, slave trade and commercial travels that occurred between Europe and other continents since the Middle Age. Africans, Arabs, Jews and Indians were to be found settling in Europe soil for the aforementioned reasons. The aftermaths of such interactions are the encounter of cultures and people from different horizons. The encounter has allowed people with different racial backgrounds to discover one another, and also increase prejudice and strife against the *other*(s). The history of English Drama supplies aesthetic evidence to back the interest of playwrights in the racial issues due to cohabitations and strife. Stereotypes, in the context of the race and ethnic encounters, have participated to persecutions by demeaning the effort to know *other*(s) from a different race or ethnic background. The reason is in the words of Robert Heilbroner who thinks that "stereotypes economize on our mental effort by covering up the blooming, buzzing confusion with big recognizable cut-outs. They save us the 'trouble' of finding out what the world is like – they give it its accustomed look." (Heilbroner 373) This implies that to stereotype someone is to desist from acknowledging his worthiness as a human being beyond his appearance. Differences cause such prejudicial interrelations.

Humans from different racial backgrounds appear to refer to their counterparts on the grounds of the received attributes that are often biased. Such an overwhelming but implicit presence of stereotypes constitutes a stumbling block to peace and social justice in *Othello*.

Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* speaks volumes of how racial issues have always prevailed in the British society throughout time. In the Renaissance period, William Shakespeare has written a couple of plays that probe the experience of coloured people who have suffered undue treatments due to their origin and skin colour.

> Shakespeare's culture had also inherited from the earlier Tudor humanists a faith in eloquence and in the power of language to educate, to civilize, and thus to help redeem the fallen race. In this respect Shakespeare's tragedies are faithful registers of a significant cultural division. (Russ 2004: 44)

It is clear from the statement above that the idea of race dominance and the conflicts that they cause are recurrent issue*s* in Shakespeare's plays. *The Merchant of Venice*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Tempest*, and *Othello*, to mention but a few, stand as epitomes of how coloured people have experienced racialisation and othering. In extreme cases, death turns out to be the lot of coloured people due to the brutalities they undergo from the society. Blacks, Arabs, Jews, Chinese and Jews throughout time have undergone the effects of stereotyping that has made them victims of attributes and a fate they did not choose. In *Othello,* (the racial motif participates to complications of the action and as Mustapha Bala Ruma would say about Othello: ("The issue of race however is its power house. Othello wears race like a badge, and flaunts it to the audience and readers alike like a medal" (M. B. Ruma 2014: 34) . The incidents that follow the crisis of the play revolve around the identity of Othello as a black Moore.

Race is therefore a central issue in *Othello.* Shakespeare explores it in order to delineate human nature combined with race relations in Venice as a multicultural context. In the words of Michael Nell, "To talk about race in *Othello* is to fall into anachronism: yet not to talk about it is to ignore something fundamental about the play that has rightly come to be identified as a foundational text in the emergence of modern European consciousness--" (Neill 1998: 361)

Owing to the centrality of racial differences and how *Othello opens ways for debatable questions*, this essay is grounded on Jacques Derrida's perspective of deconstruction. The

essay will read *Othello* in the light as Derrida's *"différance"*[1] and also discuss aspects of the play that *"defer"* and *"differ"* the racial meaning and conflicts in the play. As Alex Thomson would say, the deconstructive reading of *Othello seeks to do* "what literary studies in general do to poems, plays, and novels, breaking them down to see how they work – The implication being that of a child who takes apart their new toys on their birthday morning." (Thomson 2006: 298) The study is therefore concerned with looking at the underlying structures that work to construct the dramatic action about race and stereotypes in *Othello*. The first section discusses how racial stereotypes born by characters function as tools for the playwright to dramatize threats to peace in the play. In the second section, the study will bring out how conflicts and stereotypes in the plot of the play have culminated to the downfall of the protagonists and also helped open the debate on whether peace should be an end in itself or a means owing to the tragic end.

1- Conflicts, Peace and Tropes of Racial Slur in *Othello*

In consideration of Derrida's social theory of deconstruction, it can be assumed that both *Othello* and Venice are "a weave of pure differences". (Derrida (as quoted) 2016: 177). The play compounds structures of meaning brought together to let racial, ethnic and polemic meaning emerge. The universe of the play encompasses people, values and forces that agree and disagree towards the general meaning of the play. Indeed, the dramatization of race issues involves Shakespeare's confrontation of the protagonist to the perfidy of his white detractors whose paramount motive is the racial difference. Race in *Othello* is evoked through allusive invectives that jeopardize social relationships and individual mental stability.

In the exposition scenes of *Othello*, one can perceive the evidence that Tudor England has gone through race issues. Ethnic and racial differences stood as the stumbling block to the moral stability of Elizabethans as represented in the image of Venetians. We discover that Iago, Roderigo are Othello's collaborators and subordinates in army responsibilities. In addition, we can see that they hate him in spite of his loyal services to the State of Venice as an Army General. All seems to happen because Othello position and personality. In an allusion to Othello's stature, A. C. Bradley says:

> We do not receive this impression from Romeo or Brutus or Hamlet, nor did it
> lie in Shakespeare's design to allow more than touches of this trait to Julius

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[1] Différance in Jacques Derrida's own terms is anything abstract, an absent present.

Caesar himself; but it is strongly marked in Lear and Coriolanus, and quite distinct in Macbeth and even in Antony. Othello is the first of these men, a being essentially large and grand, towering above his fellows, holding a volume of force which in repose ensures pre-eminence without an effort, and in commotion reminds us rather of the fury of the elements than of the tumult of common human passion. (Bradley 1992: 150)

Adding to the racial difference, Othello's social position and personality, as depicted above, constitute the dramatic elements that justify Iago's and Roderigo's adversity on him. Othello is persecuted both for his ethnic origins and his position as an army general. He lives in the brink of Venetians' affection because he is black. Iago vies his position and does not hesitate to debase Othello in order to achieve his personal purposes. This evidence of racialization and xenophobia is the reality Laura Hunt Yungblut historically describes when she says in the case of aliens living in Elizabethan England that:

> …there is evidence to support the assumption—that familiarity would lead to assimilation and an easing or cessation of xenophobic tensions. Nevertheless, actual or planned attacks on aliens occurred in almost every decade of Elizabeth's reign. Their frequency increased as time passed, indicating a sustained or even mounting degree of some sort of animosity, again possibly linked to societal and/or economic stresses. (Yungblut 2004: 31)

Yungblut implies that aliens as it is the case of Othello in Venice were not only segregated against because they were strangers, but also because they constituted a threat for Elizabethans' economic and societal uplift. In *Othello*, Iago and Roderigo find it abnormal that "Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be." (Shakespeare 2005: 23) Othello is the one targeted here. The fact that Othello occupies the position of an Army General in Venice suggests a sense of Derrida's idea of deferred personality, meaning, or identity. He is assimilated and bound to share values with Venetians he is still an alien and remains as such. The society wants his services as a seasoned warrior but does not hesitate to objectify him as a second class member of the society.

Iago and Roderigo object to Othello's position because they think he is an unworthy person, a slave. They build on prejudice before they relate to Othello in spite of his duties and achievements in the benefit of the state of Venice. In the same line of thoughts, Martin Okin's posits that, "The language of these men (Iago and Roderigo) ignite a similar tendency lurking within… Brabantio" (Okin 1987: 168) Okin deftly depicts the extent of the racial adversity that marks Othello's relationship with the people around him. It is, therefore, clear to see in Ruma's words that Othello "…is in the Christian Polis but not part of it." (N. M. Ruma 2014:

36). This reality agrees with Derrida's social theory in the sense that owing to the need of security in Venice and Othello's competence as an army General adversity and authority are deferred to Othello but they all stood aware of differences that lie in the everyone's sense privilege as a community.

Indeed, all the society pretends to have adopted Othello for his services but Othello is not accepted due to his racial and ethnic origins. He is segregated and persecuted against all odds. It is my inferences that such adversities mooted with ethnic and racial conflicts are dramatic strategies through which Shakespeare addresses the issues of threatened social peace due to racial and ethnic profiling. The peace for which Othello is protecting Venice is lost in the social sphere whereby Iago and other white characters keep assaulting Othello because of his origins.

Peace is, therefore, threatened by race stereotypes through which most of the conflicts take form. Owing to stereotypes that are nothing else but constructs, Venetians do not concede any worth to Othello and people of colour to grant them their full status of citizenship among their white counterparts. This justifies the reason why Othello is reified and even referred to with base epithets. He is an elaborate instance of Derrida's absent presence. He lives in a society in which he is actually invisible though his services are needed.

Othello's elopement with Desdemona has kindled Iago's adversity on Othello. To work for Othello's destruction, Iago chooses race as a weapon. He is aware of the race prejudice prevailing in Venice and plays on it to wreck revenge. He manipulates the Venetian authorities and Desdemona's father to see Othello's engagement with Desdemona as an intolerable effrontery. As representatives of the society, Iago, Roderigo, Brabantio and the Duke share almost the same views that the Moore is not entirely human and that his behaviour is moved by an innate vice in him. Such a view is arguable when we realise the moral probity and qualities Shakespeare endows to Othello.

From a deconstructive perspective, race in *Othello* is the result of how racial differences have strayed from social peace in Venice to destabilize individuals and the whole community. One can infer that it is out of racial intolerance that Iago, and all white Venice segregate against Othello. In doing so, there is a suggestion that Shakespeare aims at drawing the attention of the reader to see the need to work more tolerance of racial differences.

In *Othello,* the *deferral* position of Iago and Othello as army men create immediacy and opens both of them collaboration and conflict. The play provides evidence to support animosity against Othello in the excerpt below:

> **Roderigo**
> You told me you hated him.
> **Iago**
> I do hate him, I swear. Three of Venice's most important noblemen
> took their hats off to him and asked him humbly to make me his
> lieutenant, the second in command. And I know my own worth well
> enough to know I deserve that position. But he wants to have things
> his own way, (Shakespeare 2005: 6)

The extract makes it clear that Iago resents Othello. Iago does not hesitate to object to all what Othello does. Othello's presence, his identity and authority are unbearable to Iago. It is out of the *immediacy* between Othello and Iago, that such rivalries have taken form to result in the overt attacks. Such a reality finds echo in Iago's enigmatic statement: "I follow him to serve my turn upon him: We cannot all be masters…" (Shakespeare 2005: 6) This excerpt illustrates Iago's desire to do away with Othello. Through this statement, we can also derive the meaning that Othello's presence and his position has turned hypothetical for Iago in spite of his presence and their collaboration as army men. For Iago, Othello is unworthy, he does not exist and must be replaced. In addition, Iago and Roderigo resort to the racial argument and seek to oppose Othello to Desdemona's father as they plan as it follows:

> **Iago**: […] I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
> For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.
> **Roderigo**: What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,
> If he can carry't thus!
> **Iago**: Call up her father
> Rouse him: make after him, poison his delight,
> Proclaim him in the street incense his kinsmen, though he in fertile climate dwell,
> Plague him with flies. Though that his joy be joy,
> Yet through such changes of vexation on't.
> As it may lose some colour. (Shakespeare 2005: 8)

The quotation supplies evidence of the workings of Iago's malice as he refers implicitly refers to Othello as a black man. The term "thick-lips" should be understood as a stereotypical feature for Othello. It is the reification of Othello as an exotic individual that Iago, Roderigo and Venice should not bear in their heart. The social and political attributes for which Venice has hired Othello are, here, disregarded to reduce him to the simple the size of his lips. The notion of the "thick-lips" echoes the Elizabethan belief in the black man's skin colour and stereotypes attached to it. The mention of the thick lips indicates scorn and hostility against Othello. It is also part of the binary oppositions that help construct the racial meaning in the

play. It is clear that once invectives and abuses are perpetrated, peace can no more hold among the characters in the play.

Part of the instability in *Othello* originates from how Iago, Roderigo, Brabantio and other characters' look down on Othello and how they expect all the society to do. It is worth saying that Iago carries the stigma of a racially perverted mentality that does not allow him to do away with stereotypes and look up to Othello as a worthy person. The consequence of such an attitude is how Iago plots every single character in his entourage to take revenge on Othello. As a result, he has manipulated the state authorities to side with him and victimize Othello.

When Iago and Roderigo make for Brabantio's house, they are aware of Brabantio's race intolerance. It is on purpose that they use the racial argument as a way to demean Othello and pull him down. Owing to the prevalence of such race prejudice, the Elizabethan theatre audience will find topical to see words of racial slur performed when they witness the interplay below:

> **Roderigo:** What ho! Brabantio! Signor Brabantio, ho!
> **Iago:** Awake! What, ho, Brabantio! Thieves! Thieves! Thieves! Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags! Thieves! Thieves!
> Enter Brabantio above, at a window
> **Brabantio:** What is the reason for this terrible summons? What is the matter there? Roderigo: Signior, is all your family within
> Iago: Are your doors lock'd?
> Brabantio: Why? Wherefore ask you this?
> Iago: Zounds! Sir! You are robb'd; for shame, put on your gown;
> Your heart is burst; you have lost half your soul:
> Even now, now, very now, an old ram
> Is tupping your white ewe. Arise
> Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
> Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
> Arise I say. (Shakespeare 2005: 9)

The extract above embodies tropes of debasement and reification. A racially biased spectator will find satisfaction in words such as *"thieves, robb'd, old ram, tupping, white ewe, devil"* that are unbecoming allusions to Othello whose crime is to have fallen in love and to have sought to marry with a lady that Roderigo vies. Here, Iago and Roderigo endeavour to use libel in order to humiliate Othello and bring him down in the face of Brabantio. The contrast of what is said in spite of the Moore's political stature is enough evidence to highlight the mischief in his detractors who brandish race as an alibi when they refer to Othello. Through these words, Othello appears in the image of a vicious person disturbing the peace in Venice.

In the attempt to deconstruct race-ridden conflicts, I found these differences and contradictions interesting because the dramatization of encompasses how the society in Venice accommodates Othello without forgetting his origins. In the lights of Derrida's social theory, it is also interesting note that Othello works and lives collaborators that impart position and responsibilities on him while they stand ready to clash with him.

Similarly, as in Genet's *Les Nègres,* the dramatized Blacks are one in a long line of underdogs, victims and outcasts, whether maids or criminals in a white dominated society. For the white community, the equation between evil and the black man has become part of the common sense and Iago knows how to play on such detrimental views in the pursuit of his schemes against Othello.

In addition, there is a simian allusion to a fellow human being when the metaphors of the *"old ram"* and *"tupping"* are evoked and associated with the Moore whose secret love with Desdemona is considered an affront and abuse against the privileged white race.

As an alien in Venice, Othello seems to have broken the ethnic and racial codes of the city in his intention to marry Desdemona. Iago and his consort take it as a challenge to their race symbolised by reason, purity and cleanliness.

In the Elizabethan period racism is held to be the order of the day in such a way that even victims, as it is shown in the case of Othello, are prone to demean themselves using a racial rhetoric. Evidence to the victims' passive acceptance transpires in the fact that, once harassed by Iago, Roderigo and even authorities in Venice, Othello turns out see his skin colour as a flaw. As one can read:

> **Othello:**
> Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate,
> Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
> Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
> Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
> Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
> Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
> Albeit unused to the melting mood,
> Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
> Their medicinal gum. (Shakespeare 2005: 202)

It is true from the excerpt above that Othello is aware of both his status as a member of the society and the racial line that marks the difference between him and the community. Such an attitude coupled with the attacks on him participate in Shakespeare's attempt create epitomes of racism against coloured people among Elizabethans. Shakespeare's achievement in this

sense should be seen in the way he confronts Othello to Venice and how Othello fails to maintain self-esteem enough to believe his skin colour has nothing to with what is happening to him.

The Moore proves permeated by the same stereotypes because his complexed morale agrees with the construct built on "stigmatized somatic marks" (Akhimie 2018: 64) and extended on the prejudice that coloured people have a predisposition to vice and immorality. This way of looking at his relationship with others is arguable when we know that Othello is loyal and noble. He could have fought his counterparts to prove his worthiness. However, Othello is typical to most human beings and as such he is in the image of Iago, the Duke, Roderigo and Brabantio, who feel content with received conceptions of others and which they use to serve their perfidious purposes. The prejudices that bind the Venetians together are the same sources of the havoc, instability and psychological disarray into which the protagonists of the play find themselves from the beginning to the end of the action in *Othello*. Many a reader have argued that Iago and Roderigo are after Othello for his position. However, substantial evidence attest that racism pushed to act the way they did. It is therefore, evident to see that in opposing the different origins and motives behind the attitudes of characters, Shakespeare has addressed race issues by showing victims and their persecutors in perpetual cohabitation. Such a dramatic process has allowed to see how Othello, falls from grace to grass due to race. From his position as an army General, he is debased through animal and reified imageries making him into a thoughtless, lecherous and morally weak person. Most peculiar through such epithets is how Othello's detractors deftly bind his physical and moral attributes to his ethnic and racial origins.

In the light of developments above, one can assume that both Othello and his detractors don't experience peace in their relationships and have a restless morale. It is my contention that out of deferred social identities and positions, Shakespeare has explored differences between characters in the process of addressing how peace is threatened by human intolerance of racial and ethnic origins as dramatized in Venice.

Shakespeare's Venice illustrates Derrida's social theory of deconstruction. It is a social context in which values and beliefs are deferred because the dramatization of issues and characters in *Othello* proceeds through binary oppositions, between black and white, superior and subordinates, peace and discord, good and evil, morality and immorality. As a result, Shakespeare has laid pathways through which readers can infer that peace and harmony in Venice is threatened by race and ethnic intolerance.

2- The Tragic End of *Othello* and Peace as a Perpetual Quest

One fundamental principle of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory is that in writing: "The text can never be closed, its argument and references can never form a fully closed system, the outside always enters the inside and subverts any pretension of closure and completeness." (Kanakis 2015: 177) This indicates that meaning remains debatable as it embodies contradictory structures of compromise that need to be maintained either by the writer or the readers. In the scope of this section, the binary oppositions that build up Venice, its populations and the values that the people interact with are a form of Dérrida's *différance*. They function as aesthetic tools put into play by the playwright who as them oppose, affirm or infirm what readers perceive as meaning about race issues and peace throughout the play.

These aspects of the play will be discussed as interplays of converse and conflicting forces that participate in the building of peace with a kind of openness as delineated in Derrida's social theory of deconstruction.

Deferred rebuke of racial differences has made conflicts in the play linger and result in tragedy. The fact that Othello lives in Venice and works for Venice, has created a sense of acceptance while the differences are kept in check. Othello's white counterparts are aware of the ethnic and racial differences but social interactions have delayed open confrontations and retaliations the white counterparts.

Although characters stood aware of racial and social differences, there is an implicit agreement to live together and create the conditions of peace in the society. However, it is worth noting that peace has become endangered due to the characters' transgression of social norms. Intolerance of racial differences has undermined cohabitation to kindle adversity against Othello in the multiracial context dramatized through Venice. Venice indeed is a typical Elizabethan society, as it highlights contending interactions between Elizabethans and their immigrants. It is the reality Andrew Pettegree refers to when he says that:

> One can logically assume—and there is evidence to support the assumption—that familiarity would lead to assimilation and an easing or cessation of xenophobic tensions. Nevertheless, actual or planned attacks on aliens occurred in almost every decade of Elizabeth's reign. Their frequency increased as time passed, indicating a sustained or even mounting degree of some sort of animosity, again possibly linked to societal and/or economic stresses. (Yungblut 2005: 31)

Andrew's insight illustrates the attitude of white characters regarding Othello. It helps see how Othello's marital bond with Desdemona is taken for an offense and why Iago objects to

Othello's authority and also produces racial arguments when he refers him. All the adversity is justified by the fact that Othello has an immigrant ascendance which causes xenophobia and racialization on the part of Iago and his kind.

However, through the tragic end of *Othello*, Shakespeare opens the debate on the concept of social discord and peace. He apparently invites his audience to think about peace and how to create the conditions of its reality. He suggests a kind of openness when it comes to the social interactions that should guarantee peace.

To achieve such a form dramatization, Shakespeare relies on lingering conflicts. It is my assumption these conflicts materialise intolerance and the impossibility to compromise towards a reconciliation of the protagonists. The culmination of these conflicts lies in the tragic end of the play that has the effects of keeping the reader hooked by suspense and a perpetual questioning on the meaning of community life.

Such a textual orientation in *Othello* is evoked by Bradley when he says that: "Nowhere else in Shakespeare do we hold our breath in such anxiety and for so long a time as in the later acts of *Othello."* (Bradley 1992: 153) Bradley, makes allusion to the strife that culminates to the gloomy atmosphere at the end of the play. Incidentally, racial intolerance has remained the central driving force and compromise proved impossible. It is also possible to note a mitigated catharsis that crowns the action of the play. In terms of theatrical effects, such a dramatic art generates and maintains deep thought on how to keep harmony in social interactions. It opens the debate about what values are worth promoting for less strife in the society.

As a matter of fact, Ben Johnson hits the mark when he states about Shakespearean tragedies that: "In his tragik (sic) there is always something wanting" (Foakes 2002: 227). This is to imply that a typical Shakespearean tragedy does not say it all, nor seek to teach any fixed way of living to its audience. Being a composition of differences in terms of expectations, the tragic end conversely confronts the audience with a questioning about what needs to be achieved for a balance in human nature social life. This state of things finds a host of evidence in the universal dimension of Shakespeare's plays which makes his art open to fit a variety of audiences and aesthetic purposes. Indeed, Shakespeare's achievement lies in a representation of human nature, as it were, with all the complexities that go with individual persons in connection to their values and challenges.

The same views transpire in the eighteenth century critiques by Coleridge who outlines the thought-ridden plots of Shakespeare's plays when he says that, as opposed to the assumption that "Shakespeare holds a mirror up to manners of life, Coleridge has argues that the

dramatist's characters are not drawn from observation but from meditation, and that the plays offer an imitation not a copy or mirror-image, of life." (Foakes 2002: 177) Coleridge makes it clear that Shakespeare's plays are an invitation to cogitate the meaning of life and our relations to others. Aesthetically, Shakespeare's plays lay pathways for inferences to the meaning and the pursuit of it as a means and not as an end in itself. It is my belief that *Othello* embodies clues towards a re-examination of peace in a multicultural setting.

To understand why the meaning of peace is indefinable in *Othello*, one needs to consider the action from the climax of the play. Especially, at the point when Othello vows to take a bloody revenge after his supposed betrayal by Desdemona. The play reveals that Othello has come to such a resolution due to Iago's manipulations and the belief that Othello is unfit to lead the army of Venice and also marry Desdemona. Othello's demise and the death of the other protagonists revives a desire to understand why they all die and what is Shakespeare's idea of justice and peace.

In the climactic scenes of *Othello*, Othello appears as is a victim or racialization and his detractors are still at work. However, he catastrophically runs his downfall. Bradley extolls this artful dramatization of a hero's demise when he states that a Shakespearean tragedy: "…lay not in the expulsion of evil: the tragedy is that it involves the waste of good!" (Braddley 1992: 29) The "waste of good" in Bradley's terms, Shakespeare does not chastise evil but victims of injustice die or suffer the same way as their detractors. To use Bradley's own terms, Othello is, therefore, *wasted* in spite his service to Venice, his love for Desdemona and the fact that he is segregated against by his white counterparts. This is telling enough on the nature of deferred Elizabethan values, social relationships and how cohabitations can work against members of a society.

The death of the hero and the other protagonists added to racial issues are to me, well-wrought to lead the readership towards the understanding of why no one is at peace with others and harmony is not achieved at the end of the play. Due to conflicts, conditions for peace becomes deferred. Each and every characters follows the motives that he thinks will satisfy his sense of peace and harmony. The end effect of such contending motives is that harmony has become impossible because characters can not to reconcile their differences and accept one another as they are. Each rejection and attacks on others have textually rescheduled peace and its meaning. The characters' plight also got worsened as the action draws closer to the end.

From the developments above, there is a suggestion that the cathartic incident do not provide an answer but start a questioning process. The emotional shocks caused by the range of victimization, racial injustice and the sudden serial deaths become coupled with disillusionment about community life and harmony. The fate of the characters causes moments of emotional conundrum and questioning for the audience who have to answer a variety of unanswered questions.

As a result, ethnic and racial intolerance contribute to the tragic end because characters have not chosen to reconcile their views. In *Othello*, we can derive Iago's manipulation of race differences and how they culminate in the degeneration of Othello's morale and Othello's abnormal behaviour. Such manoeuvres by Iago are exposed in the argument below:

> Othello: What has he said?
> Iago: 'Faith, that he did – I know not what he did.
> Othello: What? What?
> Iago: Lie?
> Othello: With her?
> Iago: With her, on her, what you will.
> Othello: Lie with her! Lie on her! – We say, lie on her, when they belie her. Lie with her! That's fulsome […] Is it possible? Confess? – Handkerchief? – Oh devil – [Falls in trance]
> Iago: Work on,
> My medicine, my medicine work! Thus credulous fools are caught;
> (Shakespeare 2005: 141)

The excerpt shows that Iago's perfidy actually works on Othello. Without openly stating what is the exact issue, Iago has succeeded in letting Othello believe that Desdemona has betrayed him. It is upon this lie that Othello makes his sociopathic decision to murder Desdemona and Cassio. Iago's joyful mood in the last statement is illustrative enough because it substantiates Iago's victory over Othello who gullibly believes his wife really betrayed him. Society has often deferred and even denied women's fidelity in the marital context. Othello is therefore, predisposed not to crosscheck with his wife before he could believe what Iago told him.
Iago's treacherous achievement lies in the false evidence and libel he wages against Othello. In his turn, Othello appears with a tendency to naively believe in Iago as a loyal collaborator. Such a dramatization of Othello is in the advantage of Iago who is sure his plans will perfectly work against Othello. The extract also alludes to Iago's use of racial slur and prejudice when he holds Othello to be *credulous* implying the easy belief in what he is told. Through that feature, social psychologists Honneth and Taylor find grounds to assert to assume that

"recognition is of great significance in our contemporary transglobal, multicultural world (Honneth, 1996; Taylor, 1992), Recognizing in this context is the act tolerating differences and accommodating one another. Therefore, recognition may ease some social tensions because it is a condition of social justice, whereby each individual deserves the right to be accepted as they are in their interactions with others. Honneth and Taylor can thus place a blame on received racist attitudes that feature Iago's assaults on Othello.

In that line of thought, the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Hegel on race and ethnicity speak volumes to pinpoint how whites have always looked down upon the black man behind the fence of stereotypes. The play also puts forward the incapacity of Iago and his kind to get rid of racial prejudices and sympathise with Othello at the moment he faints and needs medical assistance. Instead, Iago takes advantage of the situation the Moore by calling him *credulous* and as I have said in earlier developments, he links this to race and the ethnic origins of Othello. Allusions to race-ridden social crises made when we perceive that Iago's manipulations of Othello and the use he makes of racist words have participated in worsening harmony and undermine cohesion among characters and the whole Venetian society.

On the verge of the climax, it is in total dismay that the audience is brought to witness the serial deaths of the protagonists. From a theatre and performance perspective, it would have been the expectation of many Elizabethan spectators to witness the expiation of callous and evil deeds, but things turned out otherwise as good is aesthetically undercut in the same way as evil is chastised. Far from causing confusion, the dramatization is a step towards a questioning process that mark out the denouement of most Shakespearean tragedies. Incidentally, Shakespeare has his own scapegoats to fit the aesthetic limits of his sense of tragedy. Peace in Venice is jeopardized as protagonists such as Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Cassio, to mention but a few are aesthetically lost to the readers who in one way or the other sympathise with them. It is my view that, the playwright has chosen to cause such deaths in order to cause a rethinking of people's relationships and how to fight racial stereotypes and work for peace in the society. For many spectators exempt from race biases, poetic justice, the fact that vice is supposed to be punished and virtue rewarded, is disregarded and Othello turns out to be the appropriate imagery of a victim in a society that is racially prejudiced. Iago stands as the embodiment of such prejudices because he plays on the racial reality of Venice in order to do away with Othello who has been adopted by Venice and its institution but never is accepted as a part of the whole society. In spite of the mischief of his detractors, Othello displays a maintained attachment to noble values throughout the action of the play. This gives readers and spectators the feeling that "Othello is, in one sense of the word, by far the most

romantic figure among Shakespeare's heroes; … He does not belong to our world, and he seems to enter it we know not whence - almost as if from wonderland." (Braddley 1992: 3) From the excerpt above, Bradley has it that Othello is idealised and lives according to non-secular values. Therefore, Shakespeare aesthetically wrecks a woeful atmosphere at the end of the play, for, the turning point in the plot triggers an unusual "effecting a catharsis of these emotions" (Bradley 1992: 3) in the audience through the protagonists' demise. Indeed, passion does overshadow the audience when:

> Such exceptional suffering and calamity, then, affecting the hero, […] are an essential ingredient in tragedy, and a chief source of the tragic emotions, and especially of pity. But the proportions of this ingredient, and the direction taken by tragic pity, will naturally vary greatly. (Bradley 1992: 3)

The present study posits that aesthetically, Shakespeare employs the racial issues by perpetually opposition characters and issues in order to help perceive blockades to harmony in *Othello.* This in my view, triggers a questioning process on what needs to be done to achieve piece in society. The sad end of Othello has the merit of opening the debate on whether to take peace for granted in *Othello*, or to work to achieve it through tolerance and compromise. In so doing, the tragic end of the play does not seem to solve problems but rather emphasise questions that require thoughtful answers. It is, therefore arguable to assume that characters at the end of the play live in peace with one another. From their restless morale and the social unease one get the impression of a general disharmony. In the same way, spectators of *Othello* are likely to get hit emotionally, left sitting and wondering why their high expectations for justice become mitigated with the unjust deaths.

From Othello's decision to his killing of Desdemona and the serial deaths that follow, there is an impression that Shakespeare confronts the spectators in their intrinsic values about peace. The racial intolerance in the mores of Venetians led almost every protagonist to their own destruction because they were not able to compromise and give chance to everyone to live their lives irrespective of their race and choices. The situation that prevails at the end of *Othello* calls for a rethinking of racial cohabitation in a multicultural context and the need to revisit the real paradigms that participate in the promotion of peace in human societies.

It resonates to readers and spectators to become frustrated at the of innocent characters die in same way as those harmed them. Shakespeare does not seem to advocate the promotion of injustice and abuse but here lies an invitation to revalue tolerance in race relationships. Had

tolerance, Desdemona, Othello, Cassio, Roderigo and Iago would not have died and Venice would not have been disunited as it appears in the play.

When Desdemona decides to intercede in the favour of Cassio, she did not mean anything else but good will from herself and a reliance on her husband's good will. This highlights the heartrending effect of her death at end of the play. The same feeling of dismay counts in the case of Othello who dies manipulated and hated. He runs to his own demise because of a skin colour. The society in Venice seems to brandish a set of flaws connected to Othello's racial origins and Venetians have not hesitated to demean Othello because he is black.

People's values and their ethnic origins are subjective features on which it is hard for them to compromise. The white community in Venice benefits from the loyal services of Othello and they take it as a deserved privilege. It is, therefore, hard for Desdemona's father, Iago and all the white society around Othello to accept Othello and his deeds which they consider exotic. The unwillingness to compromise entertains the recurrence of racist attitudes and perpetual misunderstandings among characters, dramatized through Iago assaults on Othello.

From the perspective of deconstruction, social relationship among the people in Venice both includes and excludes people and values that maintain tensions and also put into questions why individual characters and the society as whole does experience and harmony. The overall atmosphere of tensions and the deaths at the end of the play should be seen as the underlying structures through which the reader perceives Shakespeare's management of the Elizabethan racial "experience of temporality of past, present, and future." (Thomson 2006: 299) The excerpt imply that in dramatizing racial issues and the impossibility of peace in the play, Shakespeare has represented a diachronic development of the issues in order to cause understanding the fatality behind deferred racial griefs. The protagonists' death are an understatement to say that justice is not always on the side of victims and that constant compromise is the alternative towards peace. It could have been possible for Desdemona's father and the Duke to be in good terms with Othello if their sense nobility and their sense white privileges did not conflict with Othello's exotic origins.

In the same way, Iago's ambitions and his awareness of the ethnic differences between him and Othello lay grounds for resent and more conflicts and the impossibility for harmony to prevail. Peace is only achieved through a series of compromise, to take it for granted will always increase tensions. It is a value that must be constructed and entertained through constant sacrifices. If authorities in Venice and Iago have avoided relying on social constructs,

racial slur and hatred of Othello, a good deal of the disaster would have been spared. In addition to Othello, Desdemona is a victim of a society that has not chosen, in its time, to rethink the white privilege and race prejudices. Differences have remained stiff enough to entertain discord among characters.

It is my belief that, from the start, Shakespeare has created and opposed most of the characters without making them inclined to peace. From the attitudes of Brabantio, Iago, Roderigo and the Duke, racial and social intolerance have highly contributed to the conflicts of the play. The unrest and the tragic end of the generate a form of disillusionment that comes to term with the audience's expectation to see common sense and justice take the upper hand over hatred.

The end of *Othello* is typical to the Senecan theory of tragedy in which the cathartic effect fits of the serial deaths of noble tyrants in *Othello*. In Seneca's view, catharsis becomes mitigated as emotional tensions don't get released, after the protagonists pass away. Such an aesthetic effect of the play, in my view is strictly thought provoking as to what attitudes and interactions are worth observing when it comes to the preservation of peace and harmony in the society.

Conclusion:

This study has shown that, the dramatic action in *Othello* has consisted in a dramatization of race differences and how they affect peace. These race differences and characters ambitions have been resulted in the construction of tensed cohabitation materialised in scornful attitudes. While I have attempted to uncover the implicit meaning and the allusions to race I have also looked at the differences in characters' racial origins, characters' actions and their attitudes. In highlighting the differences, I have been able to show such features of characterization participate in the construction of conflicts and undermine peace in the play. In *Othello*, Shakespeare sketches the image of Tudor England as a biased society moved by race prejudices and given a population among which reference to a coloured person transpires in racial slur.

Aesthetically speaking, William Shakespeare achieves a lot through the tragic end of *Othello*. The characters' ethnic differences, their conflicts and the tragic end of the play are dramatic strategies through which Shakespeare builds the general meaning and provokes a rethinking of social peace among the spectators of *Othello*. However, Shakespeare does not champion death and doom, but puts forward the idea that they could have survived if the various

differences are conciliated towards a harmonious cohabitation. The characters that die at end of the play, scapegoats that get sacrificed at the end of the play are, in my view how, Shakespeare sought to tell humanity to stay cautious and live in a continuous search for peace and not take it for granted. It is heartrending when victims and their detractors die at the end of the play, but there lies an indictment on human's incapacity to compromise and tolerate racial and ethnic differences.

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