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**VALIANT OTHELLO VERSUS CYNICAL IAGO: NEW HISTORICIST AND
PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDY *OTHELLO***

**CESUR OTHELLO ALAYCI IAGO'YA KARŞI: SHAKESPEARE'IN OTHELLO ADLI
TRAJEDISINE YENİ TARİHSEL VE PSİKOANALİTİK YAKLAŞIM**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze William Shakespeare's *Othello* by applying new historicist and psychoanalytic approaches. Reflections of historical events when the play was written and socio-economic conditions of Venetian society are discussed throughout this study. Othello's placement and displacement is pointed out, which most of the time placing him as the 'other' in the dominant culture. Othello's origins are not lost but hidden in order to adopt him to the dominant values of Venetian culture. Iago, representing evil, and his character traits are examined according to the psychoanalytic approach. Iago's devilish nature is a reflection of unrepressed ego, thus we may observe Freud's id in Iago.

Key Words: New Historicism, Venetian Culture, Cynicism, Psychoanalytic Approach.

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı William Shakespeare'in *Othello* adlı oyununu yeni tarihselci ve psikoanalitik yaklaşım uygulayarak analiz etmektir. Oyunun yazıldığı zamandaki tarihsel olaylar ve Venedik toplumunun sosyo-ekonomik durumu bu çalışma boyunca tartışılmıştır. Othello'nun toplum içinde kabul görmesi ve dışlanması durumu, çoğu zaman baskın kültürde onu 'öteki' olarak nitelendirmiştir. Othello'nun kökeni kaybolmamıştır; fakat baskın Venedik kültürünün değer yargılarına kendini adapte etmek için gizlemiştir. Kötülüğü temsil eden Iago ve onun karakter özellikleri, psikoanalitik yaklaşıma göre incelenmiştir. Iago'nun şeytani tabiatı bastırılmamış egodur ve böylece Freud'un ilkel benliğini Iago'da gözlemleyebiliriz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Tarihselcilik, Venedik Kültürü, Alaycılık, Psikoanalitik Yaklaşım.

Introduction

Written in 1604, *Othello* is one of Shakespeare's most highly concentrated tragedies, with no subplots and little humor to relieve the tension. Along with Shakespeare's four great tragedies, *Othello* is set in Cyprus representing a private world and focuses on the passions and the lives of its major characters. As the setting in an island implies, the characters are far away from the dominant British culture. Although Othello is the noble Moor fighting against the Turks who are great danger for Christians, the main focus on the play is not how important soldier Othello is, but of personal lives and passions of the characters. Othello's descent into jealousy and rage and Iago's continuous display of villainy results in "tragedy of character": Othello murdering his wife with a suspicion of infidelity. The play presents us two remarkable figures; Iago who is the dominant force that causes Othello to mistake his favorite lieutenant Michael Cassio having an affair with his beautiful and innocent wife Desdemona, and Iago's victim Othello.

The aim of this essay is to analyze Shakespeare's *Othello* by applying both new historicism and psychoanalytic approaches. First of all, we shall re-read the text according to new historicist approach that draws our attention mainly on Renaissance culture and literature, especially on Shakespeare and his texts leading the readers what we may call Cultural Studies. Secondly, the social and historical background of the text when it was written will be examined. As Dollimore and Sinfield explain, Shakespeare's plays appear as a reflection of economic and political system. This idea is highlighted in 'Foreword' to *Political Shakespeare*,

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a play by Shakespeare is related to the contexts of its production – to the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and to the particular institutions of cultural production . . . for culture is made continuously and Shakespeare's text is reconstructed, reappraised, reassigned all the time through diverse institutions in specific contexts. . . (Dollimore & Sinfield, 1985: Viii).

Thirdly, our attempt will be to place Othello in Venetian culture in which he appears as an outsider and then lastly the diabolic nature of Iago according to psychoanalytic approach will be analysed.

The play echoes Venetian /Elizabethan culture, the ideology and the power of the ruling élite, therefore the readers should be familiar to the socio-economic conditions of Venetian society in order to adjust Othello in this society. New Historicism “re-historicizes the text and retextualizes history” (Guerin, 1992: 322) that is to say the history is represented and recorded in written documents, in history-as-text. Besides, new historicist essays constitute another remaking or permutation of the past to present a new reality by re-situating it (Barry, 1995: 175). There will be a discussion of those affects throughout this essay since it is important to note the reflections of the historical truths in the play.

Historical and Socio-economic Background of Venice

Before analysing and placing the protagonist Othello in Venetian culture, we shall thoroughly examine the general view of Venice and the socio-economic conditions of Venetian society. Venice was a maritime republic and Genoa was Venice's most dangerous rival. The vital interest was in the overland routes to the western outlets for spices. Venice had neighbor cities competing one with the other and the powers such as popes and emperors had no effective local control. Venice's maritime imperialism was building up for an expansionist policy also in Italy (Lane, 1973: 226). Besides, Venetian- Genoese rivalry was based on controlling the Aegean, the Black Sea and the straits between (Lane, 1973: 174). Since Venetians were maritime conquerors, the spices and richness of the East compensated their economy. One of their weaknesses was that their soldiers were hired men. The crew was mostly men of many nationalities. They had been attracted by extra pay and if they heard rumors that their booty was to be taken, they might rebel. Realizing that they could not be strong at war, the Venetian government looked for allies who could be hired to fight for them. After the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Ottoman Empire continued to increase its power. Anti-Turkish diplomacy carried a crusading mantle so that in fighting the Turk, Venice was not alone. Ottoman Empire became a strong power in the fifteenth century that became nightmare of Europeans since sultan's policy was to expand westward. After the taking of Negroponte, the Turkish fleet retired within the Dardanelles. As Frederick C. Lane emphasizes; “Venice ended by a treaty in 1479 in which she renounced Negroponte and some other Aegean Islands and agreed to pay 10.000 ducats a year for trading privileges” (Lane, 1973: 236). Venetian naval supremacy during the later years brought one territorial gain. Venetian fleet made Queen of Cyprus declare that the island was in the possession of Venetians. This gain much more intensified the hostility with which Venice was regarded by other Italian states. The Turkish invasion of Otronto shocked the Italian princes so that they stopped fighting each other for a couple of years.

In 1571, in contrast, the Christian League under the command of the Hapsburg prince Don John of Austria, won the sensational victory of Leponte. It halted the advance of Ottoman sea power and saved from Turkish conquest Venice's Ionian Islands. If the Turks had won on that day, Venice would probably have lost Zante and Corfu and most of Dalmatia . . . Again, Venice gained peace by concessions, yielding Cyprus which the Turks had conquered (Lane, 1973: 248).

The defeat at Prevesa and the victory at Leponte followed by peace treaties, revealed how much Venetian naval power had declined since 1424. Spanish fleet used Christian fleet in order to dominate in North Africa. He wished Venice as an ally against Turk, but did not want Venice to strengthen. In *Othello* there is a reference about the Turkish naval defeat at Leponte on 7th of October 1571. As İşçi (1999) claims in her article, the cause of Turkish defeat is only related to the storm and there is no implication about the consequences of this defeat in the text. The storm that exterminated the Turkish fleet is described in a poetic language as follows:

A segregation of the Turkish Fleet:
For do but stand upon the foaming shore,
The chidden billow seemed to pelt the clouds,

The wind-shak'd surge, with high and monstrous main
 Seems to cast water on the burning Bear,
 And quench the guards of th'ever-fixed Pole:
 I never did lile molestation view
 On the enchafed flood. (II. i. 47)

It is historically true that by the defeat of Leponte in 1571, most of Turks had been drown. We are not even told why this war occurred. The Turkish defeat at Leponte was not enough to remove the Turkish threat in Cyprus by 1573. However, the following year after the defeat of Leponte, when Christian allies arrived in Cyprus they met with a powerful Turkish fleet there and they hesitated to attack once more. The third year Venice preferred to make a peace treaty (March 7, 1573) accordingly Venice would give up all the rights and privileges in Cyprus and accepted to pay great amount of reparations (İnalçık, 1970: 327). Consequently, Turkish sovereignty of the island lasted for three centuries, which was the period when Mediterranean trade weakened, as a result causing a financial decline (İslam Ansiklopedisi: 675). Cyprus was under the control of Turks 31 years ago when *Othello* was first performed in 1604 (İşçi, 1999: 51). However, this is not mentioned in the text. The readers/audience witness a feast held because of the disappearance of the Turkish fleet in the second Act, scene two. Of course the play is written through Christian point of view placing the Orientals as "the other". In this case the most significant event would normally be the defeat of the Turkish fleet and a relief because of getting rid of such a frightening "barbarian" threat. In other words, the history is represented or re-situated in the text. As Brannigan highlights new historicism and cultural materialism share "an understanding of texts of all kinds as both products and functional components of social and political formations" (Brannigan, 1998: 3) and the text revolves around the history, which allows "reading history as a text" (Brannigan, 1998: 9). *Othello* justifies this historical fact as this appears in the text: "Our wars are done / The Turks are drown'd" (II. i. 53). Of course this is a great victory for not only Venice but also Christianity.

If we go back to Venetian's economic situation of the era, especially during the last decades of the sixteenth century, spices again flowed into the Mediterranean from the east whereas many other 'world markets' were suffering from political disruptions. The renewed prosperity brought different groups unequally: a portion of the nobility became richer than ever. There were many Venetians prepared in the sixteenth century to venture far-away lands in search of profits. Nevertheless, no big fortunes were made in such ventures. The growth of population made urban real estate valuable. Most of the aristocratic merchant princes were converted into landed nobility. Magnificent palaces had been built in Gothic style. Besides, the clothes and jewels of the Venetian women gave Venice the reputation of being the richest city in the world. Nobility was hereditary: all descendents of nobles were also nobles. The situation was not the same for poor people. The starving peasants were begging at the streets. The guilds were expected to look after their own impoverished members. Many new hospitals and other institutions to aid were founded in the sixteenth century (Lane, 1973: 330-333).

Othello as 'the other' in Venetian Culture

As for the Black slaves, they were the gondoliers and servants. They supplied cheap labor and there was a connection between slavery and blackness. Slave trading in North Africa was complicated. The Knights of St. John crusaders claimed the right to seize Moors even if they were traveling on Venetian ships. As Lane states ". . . the highest council of Venice's government, concerned about the safety of Venetian merchants in Alexandria did their best to keep the Moorish passengers safe and claimed that the Venetian flag protected the goods and passengers carried." (Lane, 1973: 349). In 1533, the last galleys on the voyage had to bring Moorish passengers to Venice because Tunis was being besieged by Ottomans (Lane, 1973: 350). Under the light of this historical background, we may find out that *Othello* must have been one of the Moorish passengers who came to Venice. The advent of such a Moor is a significant point that should be taken into consideration. In the 1980s, literary studies in American academy came to be concerned with the historical, social, and political conditions. Furthermore, Stephan Greenblatt in *Redrawing the Boundaries* expresses those conditions as; "[e]xperiences of exclusion or otherness may of course, provoke a compensatory embrace of the dominant culture, a desire for acceptance and assimilation; but they may also (and, perhaps, simultaneously) provoke attitudes of resistance or contestation" (Greenblatt, 1992: 393). In fact, *Othello* can be considered as an alien or 'the other' who attempts to embrace the dominant Venetian culture. Of course, we may also think that *Othello*'s existence in that society might be a resistance to aristocratic

values and patriarchal order. Cohen clearly states this idea as follows: “Shakespeare and his theatre offered both symbolic assimilation of potential disorder . . . and partially successful challenges to the patriarchal order” (Cohen, 1987: 34). As in Othello’s case the theatre places him because “when the lower classes enter the picture, however, their aspirations must either be crushed (Greenblatt, 1983) or be shown to serve in the interests of the state” (Cohen, 1987: 35). Othello finds a good position for himself both in the Venetian society and in Venetian state by killing the Turk for the state’s welfare. The conflict is that he serves a state in which he himself is an alien. Greenblatt questions the story that Othello told about his life by drawing attention to Othello’s cultural identity. İŝçi states that,

Greenblatt explains this submission by the nature of Othello’s identity that, ‘depends upon a constant performance . . . of his “story”, a loss of his origins . . . and perpetual reiteration of the norms of another culture’ (1980: 245). What Greenblatt implies here is that Othello’s stories about his exotic past are a rehearsal of a buried identity. Othello charms by reiterating his origins, as he at the same time, submits to and embraces the dominant values of Venetian culture (İŝçi, 1997: 20).

Othello’s origins are not lost but buried in order to adopt him to the dominant values of Venetian culture. In other words, Othello’s stories of slavery and adventure are rehearsal of his origins. Ruth Cowhig states that Desdemona “in listening to Othello’s stories of the wonders of the African landscape, the vast deserts, mountains reaching to the heavens, the cannibals, anthropophagi and the rest . . .” (Cowhig, 1985: 13) is probably attracted to the exotic myth of ‘otherness’ than to the man. Perhaps what Desdemona finds in Othello is that a belief about black people’s high sexual potency. “For white male characters of the play, the black man’s power resides in his sexual difference from a white norm.” (Newman, 1987: 151). For example, Iago uses such sexual implications when he rouses Brabantio with “an old black ram/ is tugging your white ewe” (I. i. 26) and “Your daughter and the Moor, are now making the beast with two backs” (I. i. 27). Roderigo describes Othello as a “lascivious Moor” (28). Cowhig points out that the question of Othello’s blackness in his relation with white Desdemona is a contradictory subject since “. . . at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro” (Cowhig, 1985: 17). Similarly, Desdemona is presented in the play as a sexual subject who is punished for her desire at a male-dominated Venetian society:

She hears Othello and desires him, and her desire is punished because it threatens a white male hegemony in which women cannot be desiring subjects... she says: “I saw Othello’s visage in his mind.” The allusion here is certainly to her audience’s prejudice against the black “visage” that both the Senators and Shakespeare’s audience see in Othello, but Desdemona “saw” his visage through hearing the tales he tells of his past, tales which, far from washing the Moor white as her line seems to imply, emphatically affirm Othello’s link with Africa and its legendary monstrous creatures (Newman, 1987: 152).

In *Othello* a vision of blackness and femininity with passion and desire stand outside the culture and within at the same time. In other words, both black people and women were considered as second-class citizens who are supposed to act according to the social norms of the dominant society. They are supposed to be submissive characters following the dictates of the social values. For instance, Desdemona elopes with Othello ignoring race, class, and age difference by disobeying the most respected father figure Brabantio. On the other hand, the Duke excuses Othello’s unaccustomed marriage because of emerging Turkish threat and Othello is the commander-in-chief of the Christian army that will fight against Turks. In another time the Duke would most probably disapprove of this marriage and punish him, nevertheless the Duke defends Othello and tries to console Brabantio. The racist and sexist discourses of the era are pronounced pointing out the situation of both Desdemona and Othello:

Shakespeare was certainly subject to racist, sexist, and colonialist discourses of his time, but by making the black Othello a hero, and by making Desdemona’s love for Othello, and her transgression of her society’s norms for women in choosing him, sympathetic, Shakespeare’s play stands in a contestatory relation to the hegemonic ideologies of race and gender in early modern England (Newman, 1987: 157).

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper about the advance of black Moors, they may most probably look for equality with white men since they have been treated as slaves and monstrous creatures throughout the centuries. Paul Robenson who played *Othello* at the Savoy Theatre in 1930 states that, “this play is about the problem of minority group – a blackamoor who tried to find equality among the whites” (Cowhig, 1985: 22). This is another point of view, why Othello tries to integrate himself to the Venetian society. He dedicates himself to the high interests of the State. As Cowhig states:

Othello, proud of his services to the States, and committed to the State’s religion, falsely believes that he is an accepted part of that society, and that marriage into that society would be tolerated. The normally deceitful Iago is unusually truthful when he speaks of Othello’s naivety! Othello’s ‘integration’ into white society has involved him in the false conception that white is angelic (Cowhig, 1985: 12-3).

Racist Iago successfully arouses Brabantio with all the prejudice of Venetian society and he reaches his goal. According to Brabantio the union of Desdemona and Othello is ‘a treason of the blood’ (I. i. 28) and ‘against all rules of nature’ (I. iii. 37). However, Othello confidently integrates himself to the Venetian society by his services to the State: “My services which I have done the Signiory / Shall out-tongue his complaints” (I. ii. 30). If the State had not been in danger, Brabantio’s expectation of support from the Duke and Senate would have been realised. Still, he is disappointed because the Duke addresses Othello as ‘valiant Othello’.

In the last scene, Othello reminds of his services to the State, which he thinks a way to integrate himself to the society: “I have done the Senate some service, and they know’t: No more of that.” (V. ii. 137) Even in the last speech of Othello, he boasts of killing a Turk for the welfare of the Senate: “. . . Where malignant, and a turban’d Turk/ Beat a Venetian, and traduc’d the State./ I took by th’throat the circumcised dog,/ And smote him, thus. (He stabs himself)” (V,ii 152-56). As İşçi points out Othello from the beginning of the play was tolerated by Venetians, because he was the leader of Christendom forces against the Turks. He was considered to be a good citizen while he murdered state enemies (İşçi, 1997: 23). This was an important credit for Othello where he found acceptance in the society still his Moorish nature would be a question mark. Both for Venetians and Elizabethans, the Turks were barbarians. By killing a Turk, Othello is purified but still there is a duality in the action. Killing Desdemona is considered something to be bad but killing a Turk places him as a good citizen. In fact, Othello is himself an alien in the society. Ania Loomba declares that Othello’s

success depends substantially on his ability to mingle socially in Venetian society, and on his gift for telling stories. His tales buy him access to Brabantio’s home . . . his linguistic abilities are also part of his particular foreign-ness, of the seductive charm of another kind of non European-ness than Caliban’s (Loomba, 1996: 175).

Even if Othello serves for the State, it is impossible to deny his real cultural identity. Althusser uses the term ‘interpellation’ to describe the process of identification and subjectivity that serves the interests of the ruling class. Althusser claims that ideology is transformed by ‘interpellation’ and once the individual recognizes the hail, he becomes a subjective position. As in Othello’s case, Venice hails Othello as a barbarian and he knows that it is he who has been addressed (İşçi, 1997: 22). According to Loomba, Othello is Shakespeare’s ‘other’ who attracts the attention of Elizabethan audience. Upper-class pleasures rehearsed the encounter of Europe and its others so that it reproduced cultural difference on the stage (Loomba, 1996: 180). Ambition was reckoned as a sin in Shakespeare’s time; but it helped Othello to escape the humiliation of his early life. Nevertheless, he was a successful soldier approved by the Senate.

When we reconstitute the canonical text in non-canonical way, it leads us to question why the Moor stands in that Venetian society and what this outsider was saying to Europeans. This reflects the view of one culture to another outside, and identifies itself by the ‘other’. Such conflicts and ‘others’ are the products of historical, social, economical and cultural background that gain importance in a written literary work. Inevitably, Shakespeare’s play “stands in a contestatory relation to the hegemonic ideologies of race and gender in early modern England” (Newman, 1987: 157). Hence, different readings that create different point of view provide the reader to form a new perception in analyzing the text.

Iago as Representation of Evil: A Psychoanalytic Approach

After trying to point out the placement of Othello as the “other” and an outsider in Venetian culture, we would like to analyze Iago’s character traits that exist from the beginning until the end of the play as a demon representing evil. In psychoanalytic terms, the focus will be on both the handkerchief which Othello inherits from his mother and Iago’s darker side of the character. First of all, we shall focus on the handkerchief as a signifier. The handkerchief is very important for Othello, since it passes from one generation to another. It first appears as a love token given to Desdemona by Othello. When the handkerchief is first given to Desdemona, it represents her virtue and their chaste love, which later turns out to be a proof of her unfaithfulness. Newman interprets the existence of this handkerchief as a fetish:

In psychoanalytic terms, the handkerchief which Othello inherits from his mother and then gives to Desdemona has been read symptomatically as the fetishist’s substitution for the mother’s missing phallus. Like the shoe Freud’s young boy substitutes “for the woman’s (mother’s) phallus which the little boy once believe in and does not wish to forego,” the handkerchief is the fetish which endows “women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects” – that is, makes them like men (Newman, 1987: 156).

According to Freud’s psychological approach it is possible to depict the sexual inferences that are suppressed by the superego. To one of the Freud’s theories;

human behavior is motivated ultimately by what we would call sexuality. Freud designates the prime psychic force as libido, or sexual energy. His third major premise is that because of the powerful social taboos attached to certain sexual impulses, many of our desires and memories are repressed (Guerin, 1992: 119).

The handkerchief associates with the mother, witchcraft, and femininity figure a female sexual topography in male possession: violated virginity and deceit. It also figures out Desdemona’s sexual parts: “the nipples, which incidentally are sometimes represented in the courtly love blason as strawberries, lips, and even perhaps the clitoris, the berry of sexual pleasure nestled beneath phalanged leaves.” (Newman, 1987: 156)

Sexual implications are common throughout the play as Iago uses for Othello ‘a lasciuvious Moor’ and ‘making the beast with two backs’ (I. i. 27). According to the Freudian theory, there are three stages: oral, anal, and the phallic. As mentioned above, the existence of the handkerchief as a fetishist object, its connotation is closely related to sexual objects as phallic symbols. Handkerchief is only an object, but it is very important for Othello because he takes it as a symbol. Therefore, the implication of handkerchief in *Othello* signifies sexual connotations as Freud applies to the objects: “Freudian interpretation is popularly thought to be a matter of attributing sexual connotation to objects, so that towers and ladders, for instance, are seen as phallic symbols.” (Barry, 1995: 98)

In analyzing Iago and his devilish character, some parallelism in Diderot’s *Rameau’s Nephew* shall be depicted. Trilling puts forward Diderot’s work, in which the dialogue takes place between Diderot himself and a nephew of famous composer. The protagonist, Rameau, is despised, outcast, and shameless character what Hegel calls ‘disintegrated consciousness’. He breaks all the normal social values and makes new combinations with the pieces. As for Diderot, Hegel calls him the ‘honest consciousness’. He considers him reasonable, decent, and dull. Rameau is lustful, greedy, and arrogant. Diderot gives him a kind of superiority over himself as though Rameau represents the dangerous elements, but at the same time necessary ones that lie beneath the decorum of social life. We can find in Rameau Freud’s id, and in Diderot Freud’s ego. It is the perception of the hidden element of human nature and of the opposition between the hidden and the visible (Lodge, 1972: 277). Iago acts like Rameau who represents ‘disintegrated consciousness’. We may also observe Freud’s id in Iago, since his repressed evil deeds come to the surface as he ideologically poison Othello. Iago is greedy, arrogant and lustful who is jealous of Othello’s wife. His evil nature coming from the deeper part of his soul contributes the arrangement of the events as he wishes. In other words, the aim of psychoanalysis is the control of night side of life. As it is stated in *20th Century Literary Criticism*: “Where id was – that is, where all the irrational, non-logical, pleasure seeking dark forces were — ‘there shall ego be’ – that is intelligence and control” (Lodge, 1972: 280). In fact, Iago controls the action and undoes the noble Moor by his devilish cunning. Iago influences Othello whom we see as a faultless hero and as a result, Othello’s strength and virtue turn against him. Iago is cynical character from the beginning until the end

of the play, which reminds us the darker side of the unconscious. Iago is satisfied when his plan works and he is presented as a devil character always doing bad deeds. His cynicism is recurrent throughout the play. He says:

“Virtue? A fig! ‘tis in ourselves that what we are thus, or thus” . . . (I. ii. 44).

“I am not what I am” (I, i, 72)

Iago’s id has no limits and it is free of any repression. He is selfish and ignores the other people’s faith. In the beginning of the play, Iago masks his evil ideas and behaves Othello as if they were close friends. However, through the end of the play Iago’s cynicism is unmasked, as Cowhig states, “Othello looks down at Iago’s feet for the mythical cloven hoofs and demands an explanation from that ‘demi-devil’, reminding us that blackness of soul in this play belongs to the white villain rather than to his black victim” (Cowhig, 1985: 12). Iago puts no faith in love and he tells Roderigo that “. . . It cannot be long that Desdemona should continue her love to the Moor . . . nor he his to her”. (I. iii. 44) Iago hates love between Othello and Desdemona. In other words, their devoted love for each other disturbs Iago. His cynicism is nonstop in action. Knight states Iago’s cynicism as follows: “[h]e hates their beauty, to him a meaningless, stupid thing. That is Iago. Cynicism is his philosophy, his very life, his ‘motive’ in working Othello’s ruin. The play turns this theme: the cynical intellect pitted against a lovable humanity transfigured by qualities of heroism and grace” (Knight, 1977: 112). Besides, Knight points out Iago’s diabolic cynicism in order to destruct Othello and Desdemona’s love: “Cynicism is the key to his mind and actions.” (Knight, 1977: 113)

Iago cannot endure positive and constructive energy that comes out of a passionate love. He finds a way out only by accusing Desdemona of infidelity: “That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it; That she loves him, ‘tis apt and of great credit.”(II. i. 56) He is a real villain and his plans always arise out of his cynical depths of his nature. Besides, Iago’s knowledge of Othello’s character makes him successful in his plot. Accordingly, Iago “is a man absolutely infatuated and delivered over to certain destruction”, (Leavis, 1952: 138) because he is convincing as a person. As Bradley points out:

. . . it is plain that we should see in Iago’s prompt success is not so much Iago’s diabolic intellect as Othello’s readiness to response. Iago’s power, however, in fact, in the temptation—scene is that he represents something that is in Othello – in Othello the husband of Desdemona: the essential traitor is within the gates (Leavis, 1952: 140-41).

Iago confesses that he associates himself with Othello: “Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago: / In following him, I follow but myself” (I, i, 84-85). We would also like to draw attention to the term ‘the shadow’ in order to explain why Iago’s character embodies such cynicism. According to Guerin, “the shadow is the darker side of our unconscious self, the inferior and less pleasing aspects of the personality, which we wish to suppress” (Guerin, 1992: 170). The most common archetype is the Devil representing the “dangerous aspect of the unrecognized dark half of the personality. In literature we see symbolic representations of this archetype in such figures as Shakespeare’s Iago, Milton’s Satan . . .” (Guerin, 1992: 170). Iago’s dark half of the personality makes him a cynical character that is why he is evil and destructive. He belongs to a different world because he is wholly negative: “Iago is a demon of cynicism, colourless, formless, in a world of colours, shapes, and poetry’s music . . . Iago would make a discord of the Othello music” (Knight, 1977: 116-17). Iago’s devilish character is backed up by his racist approach who most of the time tries to place Othello as “the other” in the hegemonic culture. Besides, Iago can be considered as the idea of an enemy the “Turk”, as Nabil Matar states, “The flaw in Othello lies in his inability to see the ‘Turk’ near him” who is “Iago the Turk” (Matar, 2005: 31-32). Consequently, Iago’s evil character also makes the audience/readers to reconsider Iago’s function in the play, because the playwright indirectly strenghtens the racist image of the Turks: “evil of the evil”.

CONCLUSION

As a result, the play echoes the social and economical conditions of Venetian society in which Othello finds a perfect place for himself. Still, he is an outsider in the dominant hegemony. The text and the history are hand in hand, because the readers may observe some historical events in the play when the play was written. The playwright is aware of the social and historical conditions of that era and he places his protagonist and text accordingly. In the light of this perspective, the play ‘retextualizes the history’.

Black slaves and Moors appeared in England working as the gondoliers and servants. They supplied cheap labor and there was a connection between slavery and blackness. Even if Othello's Moorish origins are not emphasized throughout the play, he does not belong to the hegemonic Anglo white man culture. Although Othello boasts of killing Turks who are considered as the enemies of the State, he can not escape from his origin because he was one of those. As Nabil Matar states, the Britons were engaged with the Turks and the Moors who "belonged to the most powerful of all the non-Christian civilizations" and from the Elizabethan England there was a great development of "their aglocentric view of the world" leading an "aggressive islomocentrism" (Matar, 1999: 42). In this perspective, Othello is displaced and considered as "the other" in the hegemonic culture, although he did a great job for the army. There is a kind of duality; the Venetian Christians employs a Moor to fight and defeat the Ottoman Turks both of which are outsiders. On the other hand, Iago's cynicism can well be analysed by psychoanalytic approach. This also draws attention to the antagonist Iago who is the real enemy acting against Othello. Although Othello is fighting against the Ottoman Turks and accomplishes to defeat the enemy, he cannot fight against the enemy within himself. Iago, affecting the psychology of Othello, becomes the worst enemy who destroys him through the end of the play. Perhaps, we should ask a question whether who is the 'real' enemy: Iago or the Turks? In fact, Shakespeare's work bears universal truths in relation to the dominant ideologies, which secure a society's understanding of what the truth is. As our understanding of Shakespeare broadens, we may apply several contemporary approaches: Namely, feminism, cultural materialism, and various forms of Marxist criticism. Shakespeare's use of text as cultural commodity allows one to examine and discuss about the plurality of the text that lives in history and the plurality of the ideological issues control the text's reproduction at a particular historical moments and psychoanalytic approach and as we have tried to apply to *Othello*.

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