Iago as Moral Other
in Jonathan Munby's
Production of *Othello* (2016)

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Undergraduate Research Scholarship

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Othello

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Othello as Racial <u>Other</u>

"rich Eastern garments, strongly scented with musk"
wear a turban
thick African accent
difference in skin color

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Othello as Racial <u>Other</u>

object of alienation

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Othello as Racial Other
identification and corresponding alienation

"If I identify with the Democrats, I am alienated from the Republicans. If I identify with my father, I am alienated to some extent from my mother. Worse yet, every alienation brings with it a sense of loss and creates boundaries between *self* and *others*" (Smith 322).

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What devices were used to
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What devices forced distinction
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Close Textual Analysis:
Investigative reading of text wherein rhetorical
features, structural elements, cultural references,
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changes in poetic meter, thematic material,
juxtapositions highlighting tension, and evaluation
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Literature Review:
Examination of historic and current scholarship on idea of otherness and presence of morality in Othello. Collect data for foundation of critique of Munby's portrayal of Iago.

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Performance Criticism:
Analysis of theatrical techniques such as script alterations, scenic design, lighting design, costume design, props, blocking, music, actor's performance, and interaction with audience to gather data of "Moral Otherness."

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Thesis

1. Munby's *Othello* initially guides the audience into self-identification with Iago.
2. Challenges each member of the audience to distinguish himself or herself from Iago's character and stand opposed to his inhumanity.

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Morality

1. The religious environment of William Shakespeare, *Othello*'s playwright

Born 1564
1558: Queen Elizabeth returned England to Protestantism
1559: Queen Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity

Bible and the Book of Common Prayer

Morality

2. *Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare

Matthew 7:2, "For with what judgement ye
judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure
ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

The Beatitudes
articulate moral principles
of selflessness, care for others,
and endurance in times of suffering.

1603

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Theatre Production

Devices:
lighting, props, costume, stage direction, sound, blocking, and setting

"limited life and then disappears from view" (deKoven 155).

Self-Criticism:
"Each play is a mirror of reality" (Adler 335).

Audience as Performer

laughing, applause, whistling, crying, booing, sighing, silence

"Theatre is one of the only forms of art in which the subject is the same as the object. The art form has human beings portraying human beings while being watched and observed by other human beings. It allows the human audience to criticize themselves by criticizing the mirrored image before them" (Magbanua 8).

"Leaning forward, sitting on the edge of their seats, the audience play a part in what transpires on stage, they actively contribute to the creation as co-creators" (Heim 146).

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Breaking the Fourth Wall and Humor
Blocking with Brabantio's appearance
Blocking after Cassio states, "I do not understand."
Added reaction after Roderigo hugs Iago

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Lighting
Top of the Show
Freeze frame with Cassio and Desdemona
> "...we are mentally joined with him in our
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> (Novy 114.)

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Other Characters

Roderigo for Dominance

Desdemona

Cassio for Understanding Trust

Othello "This displacement of audience perspective from the victims' point of view certainly justifies Aristotle's idea of pity as a classic emotional response to tragedy: we are sorry to see well-meaning personae destroyed by their own credulity. But we cannot identify with either their ignorance or their moral simplicity" (deGravelles 156).

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Distinction

Other Characters
Blocking of Othello and Desdemona
Othello and Props

Distinction

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Distinction

Other Characters
Blocking of Othello and Desdemona
Othello and Props

No Breaking of the Fourth Wall

Distinction

Other Characters
Blocking of Othello and Desdemona
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No Breaking of the Fourth Wall

Blocking
Blocking after Emilia's Kiss
Blocking with Desdemona

Distinction

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Blocking
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Lighting
Ending Scene

Conclusion

Iago's actions opposed Judeo-Christian teaching and the Beatitudes

Every performance inevitably disappears from view. Some combat this disappearance with archival recordings, but these are limited to one specific performance. This thesis preserves the theatrical production for future reference.

"Although the director wanted ambiguity, it was [Antony Sher] who was clear about the meaning of Iago's confrontational stare at the audience: In our production, Iago was left in a sitting position after Othello wounded him; handcuffed, head bowed. Then after Lodovico's closing couplet, and just before a snap black out, we had Iago suddenly look up, confronting the audience with his eyes. [The director] wanted the moment to be a strange, final aside, enigmatic, open to your own interpretation, but I was always clear about it myself. The dangerous wordsmith may be silent, but in my head this question always rang out: *You saw what was happening – why didn't you stop it?*" (Maguire 34).

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