

## Worksheet 5 – Othello

### Review: Lecture Religion

**Can you answer these questions, which are based on the previous lecture from Professor Lisa Hopkins about Iago?**

- A. What words were AC Bradley (1945) interested in when exploring Iago?
- B. Why interesting connection did Barbara Everett (2007) make between Iago’s name and the Patron Saint of Spain?
- C. Oliver Parker (1995) directed a film of Othello; what new concept was introduced with his presentation of Iago?

### Recall: Lecture Race

**Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.**

1. The reason the first response to Othello was sympathetic was explained because the audience saw Shakespeare’s principle actor. Who played the first Othello? (Time 0.34)
  - a) Richard Burbage
  - b) Will Kempe
  - c) John Heminges
  - d) Henry Condell
2. The first character-based approaches presented in the lecture was the views of Friedrich Shlegel. How did Shlegel see Othello? (Time 1.23)
  - a) As a barbarian, a savage
  - b) As stupid and self-deceiving
  - c) As exotic, strange and exciting
  - d) As heroic and principled: a noble character
3. AC Bradley (1905) said of Othello, “He comes before us, dark and grand, with a light upon him from the sun where he was born.” This presents Othello as ... (Time 2:15)
  - a) As a barbarian, a savage
  - b) As stupid and self-deceiving
  - c) As exotic, strange and exciting.
  - d) As heroic and principled: a noble character.
4. How did F R Leavis (1937) describe Othello? (Time 3.57)
  - a) As a barbarian, a savage
  - b) As stupid and self-deceiving
  - c) As exotic, strange and exciting.
  - d) As heroic and principled: a noble character.
5. How did Helen Gardener (1955) describe Othello? (Time 3.57)
  - a) As a barbarian, a savage
  - b) As stupid and self-deceiving
  - c) As exotic, strange and exciting.
  - d) As heroic and principled: a noble character.

### Analysis

**In the lecture Professor Hopkins presents a historicist reading of the play viewing the role of Othello as being strange and a way of seeing strange lands: we see through him a glimpse into other worlds.**

(Time 6:15)

Read through this speech and consider Othello’s presentation of other worlds.

**Othello** 130 Her father loved me, oft invited me,  
Still questioned me the story of my life  
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,  
That I have passed.  
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,  
135 To th' very moment that he bade me tell it,  
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach,  
Of being taken by the insolent foe  
140 And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence  
And portance in my traveler's history.  
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
Rough quarries, rocks, hills whose heads touch heaven  
It was my hint to speak—such was my process—  
145 And of the Cannibals that each others eat,  
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
Grew beneath their shoulders. These things to hear  
Would Desdemona seriously incline.  
But still the house affairs would draw her hence,  
150 Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,  
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear  
Devour up my discourse, which I, observing,  
Took once a pliant hour and found good means  
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
155 That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,  
Whereof by parcels she had something heard  
But not intently. I did consent,  
And often did beguile her of her tears  
When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
160 That my youth suffered. My story being done  
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs.  
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,  
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful.  
She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished  
165 That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked me  
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,  
I should but teach him how to tell my story  
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.  
She loved me for the dangers I had passed,  
170 And I loved her that she did pity them.  
This only is the witchcraft I have used.  
Here comes the lady. Let her witness it.

6. Professor Hopkins talks about Othello's speech being hypnotic. What evidence is there in this speech that Othello is hypnotic?
7. Othello was described by Professor Hopkins as a window to other worlds. What examples of the exotic are presented in the speech?

#### Evaluation

In the lecture, Professor Hopkins explores Wilson Knight's 'The Othello Music'. (Time 2:42)

Read through this extract and then answer the following question.

Othello is dominated by its protagonist. Its supremely beautiful effects of style are all expressions of Othello's personal passion... It holds a rich music all its own, and possess a unique solidity and precision of picturesque phrase or image, a peculiar chastity and serenity of thought. It is, as a rule, barren of direct metaphysical content. Its thought does not mesh with the reader's: rather it always stands outside us, aloof. This aloofness is resultant of an inward aloofness of image from image, word from word. The dominant quality is separation, not, as is more usual in Shakespeare, cohesion...

Yet the dominant quality in this play is the exquisitely moulded language, the noble cadence and chiselled phrase, of Othello's poetry. Othello's speech, therefore, reflects not a soldier's language, but the quality of soldiership in all its glamour of romantic adventure; it holds an imaginative realism. It has a certain exotic beauty, is a storied and romantic treasure-house of rich, colourful experiences.

G. Wilson Knight 'The Othello Music' *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy*

8. Evaluate your to the characterisation of Othello and the purpose within the play, considering both the quotation above as well as the other critical voices mentioned in the lecture.

### Glossary

- **Burbage** - An English stage actor, widely considered to have been one of the most famous actors of the Globe Theatre and of his time.  
*E.g. Richard Burbage was the first actor to play Othello.*
- **Sublime** - A sense of awe or wonder created from experiencing the natural world.  
*E.g. The Romantics began to view the sublime as an experience beyond measure.*
- **Exotic** - Foreign, from another country.  
*E.g. I ate exotic food.*
- **Versification** - Turning something into a poem by using metre, rhyme and form.  
*E.g. The versification of this grocery list was a lot harder than I imagined.*
- **Hypnotic** - The creation of a sleepy, relaxing or trance-like state.  
*E.g. Her singing was hypnotic.*
- **Lyrical** - Expressing the writer's emotions in an imaginative and beautiful way.  
*E.g. He gained a devoted following for his lyrical writing.*
- **Cunningly** - In a clever and deceitful way.  
*E.g. An important document was cunningly hidden under the noses of the police.*
- **Adduce** - To offer as example, reason, or proof in discussion or analysis.  
*E.g. We can adduce evidence in support of a theory.*