

TAKING SHAKESPEARE OUT OF THE DOCK.
AN ALTERNATIVE READING AND METHOD OF TEACHING
SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO* IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract. Taking Shakespeare's *Othello* as a case study, this paper proposes a novel method of reading and teaching traditional and canonical literary texts. *Othello* has been interpreted by critics in a highly conservative way so that it has been seen as endorsing existing racial hierarchies, but never as questioning or destabilising them. This research offers an alternative reading of *Othello* by showing how Shakespeare's dramatic strategy rebutted racism and subverted the racist outlook, arguing that the playwright intentionally reverses the central roles of the play by turning Iago, the white Venetian, into the villain and Othello, the Moor and stereotyped villain, into the noble hero. The paper also proposes an innovative teaching method for Shakespeare's play(s) by incorporating technology and modern media. In proposing these novel methods in reading and teaching *Othello*, the paper attempts to demonstrate the relevance and the literary value of Shakespeare in the 21st century and to help teachers motivate their learners through a combination of effective and engaging teaching approaches.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Othello, racism, teaching methods, technology

1. INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's *Othello* has been interpreted by critics in a highly conservative way so that it has been seen as endorsing existing racial hierarchies, but never as questioning or destabilising them. This research offers an alternative reading of *Othello* by showing how Shakespeare's dramatic strategy rebutted racism and subverted the racist outlook arguing that the playwright, intentionally reverses the central roles of the play by turning Iago, the white Venetian, into

the villain and Othello, the Moor and stereotyped villain, into the noble hero.

Shakespeare also has been taught in a “traditional way”, which is demotivating for students. Today, a large number of teachers continue to teach Shakespeare using traditional methods such as asking students to read the play at home, and then come to class, either to discuss the content or spoon-feed them by telling them what different passages mean. A better approach, this paper argues, would be one that uses technology-based methods; this approach would help students increase their abilities to understand, interpret, and discuss Shakespeare.

2. AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF SHAKESPEARE’S *OTHELLO*

The racial issues, which are at the heart of Shakespeare’s *Othello* are clear from the opening scenes of the play. Racist comments come from the Venetian characters, namely Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio. Roderigo, for instance, refers to Othello as “the thick lips” (1.1. 66 - 67). This racist portrayal denotes Othello’s blackness and foreignness. In their provocation of Brabantio, by informing him about Desdemona’s marriage to an elopement with Othello, Iago and Roderigo use extremely unpleasant animalistic sexual imagery. Iago suggests to Brabantio that “an old black ram/ Is tupping your white ewe” (1.1.88-9). Othello’s and Desdemona’s marriage is depicted as a mating of two animals. Othello’s race is connected, through the use of metaphor, with rampant sexuality, blackness and evil.

As far as the social and historical context of the play is concerned, Bristol’s pioneering work on the social function of carnival and theatre is illuminating in this context. Bristol’s reading of *Othello* sheds light on its cultural context. He defined *charivari* and its function saying:

If certain history plays can be read as rites of ‘uncrowning’ then *Othello* might be read as a rite of ‘unmarrying’. The specific organizing principle operative

here is the social custom, common throughout early modern Europe, of *charivari*. The abusive language, the noisy clamour under Brabantio's window, and the menace of violence in the opening scene of the play link the improvisations of Iago with the codes of carnivalesque disturbance or *charivari* organized in protest over marriage of the play's central characters (...). *Charivari* was a practice of noisy festive abuse in which a community enacted its specific objection to inappropriate marriage and more generally exercised widespread surveillance of sexuality (Bristol 1990, 3).

Bristol's comments on the *charivari* scene in *Othello* have shed light on the play's impact on its intended audience and helped the reader to remember the historical, social, and cultural context in which it was written. He also put the different views of race relations that the play examines in their social context. The *charivari* scene does not only draw attention to the concerned individuals but also to sexuality and social stereotypes. Shakespeare's text reveals the racial attitudes that were current in his day and which, I think, are still valid today.

Owens and Goodman argued that "it is precisely the emphasis on race within the play that keeps it 'current' and makes it a popular choice for contemporary study and performance, often in experimental productions that set out to 're-view' the attitudes of the play in a modern context" (2004, 107). A.C. Bradley and F.R. Leavis are two critics who differ in their analysis of *Othello*'s character. Leavis is anti-Othello, he saw him as responsible for his own downfall. It is not "external evil" that is responsible, and Iago is not to blame wholly (1952). However, Bradley is pro-Othello, he sees Iago as the driving force and manipulator not only of the *charivari* scene but also of more subtle ideas and events (1992). Dubey claimed that,

(...) if we take into account the fact that Bradley considers Iago to be more deserving of his attention than Othello, because he devotes an entire chapter to Iago whereas he divides one chapter among the rest of the characters, then that could well reflect the colonialist or racist mind of a Western critic rather than the colonialist designs of Shakespeare (2011, 19-20).

Dubey argued that “the Western mind has gone to the extent of making the play equally the play of which Iago is the protagonist” (2011, 20). Leavis argued that Othello’s “self-idealisation” and “self-dramatization” led to his “blindness” and “obtuse and brutal egotism” and described his “lack of self-knowledge” as “humiliating and disastrous” (1952, 62). Most Western critics tend to throw Othello into the margins of Shakespeare’s play in order to leave the centre of the stage for the white villain Iago. The question that one should raise here is whether Shakespeare did want Othello to be at the centre of his play or whether he too, like most Western critics, wanted to relegate him to the margins?

Western critics seem to fail to understand Shakespeare’s refutation of racism in *Othello*. Shakespeare seems to sympathise and identify with Othello and portrays Iago as a Machiavellian schemer and manipulator, a sinister villain and the representative of racist prejudice. The modern critics’ “attitudes towards Othello unfortunately echo the old racist view that is the very target of the play’s dramatic movement” (Al Dabbagh 2011,17). Shakespeare refutes racism and subverts the racist outlook when he intentionally reverses the main roles of the play by making Iago, the white Venetian, the villain; Othello, the stereotyped Moor, the noble hero, and by casting Iago as no more than a recipient of the negative characteristics usually attributed to the stereotyped African, namely sexual obsession, pusillanimity, perfidiousness, racism and envy. Andreas, commenting on Iago’s machinations, contended that “it is wrong to interpret Iago as motiveless, that Iago is clearly motivated by racism and hatred, and that his character is representative of the views of Western society at large for its predisposition to the periodic, ritual slaughter of marginal and aboriginal groups and all whites -especially women – who consort with them” (1992, 43). The fact that Shakespeare transforms Iago into the “reflecting mirror of racist prejudice is the essential source of the magnificent achievement of this play” (Al Dabbagh 2011, 19). He seems to follow a strategy of reversal of Stereotypes. Othello’s superiority is emphasised in the play. By making Desdemona fall in love with

Othello and portraying Iago as the Machiavellian villain, Roderigo as the typical rich debauched character, and Emilia and Cassio as frail and flawed characters, Shakespeare seems to challenge all theories of racial superiority.

Othello's nobility, superiority, pride, self-confidence, and high-mindedness are highlighted from the very early scenes of the play:

I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reached. For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the seas' worth
(1.2, 21-28)

Shakespeare gives us a faithful representation of the racial issues during the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries. Othello, a black character, becomes no more than a recipient of the negative traits the white self projects onto him.

One of the key aspects of European self-projection in literature is its representation of the other, which is interpreted by way of stereotypic reproduction. The stereotypic representation is based on processes of Othering, which are fundamental in colonisation. In the words of Spivak, "othering is the process by which imperial discourse creates its others" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 188). The othering of Othello in Shakespeare's play and his construction as savage and inferior by the Venetian characters Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio, depends upon what Jan Mohamed terms the Manichean Allegory, in which a binary discursive opposition between races is produced. The term "Manicheanism" is adopted from the "Manichean allegory of the third century A.D, according to which Satan was represented as co-eternal with God, an equivalent opposition to God. This implication, which relates that the two realms of spirit and matter are always and eternally separate and could never be linked, implies

an extreme form of structure” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 149). In the field of postcolonial studies, “Manicheanism is a term for the binary structure of imperial ideology”.

Jan Mohammed has used the uncompromisingly dualistic aspect of the concept to describe the process by which imperial discourse polarises the society, culture and very being of the coloniser and colonised into the Manichean categories of good and evil” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 149-50). The Manichean Allegory, Jan Mohamed argued, “is the central trope of imperialism that converts racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference” (1985, 80). The relationship between the dominant and the subordinate culture is characterised as one of ineradicable opposition. Even though the opposing entities of the allegory change “good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilisation and savagery, rationality and sensuality, self and other, subject and object - they are always predicated upon the assumption of the superiority of white self and the inferiority of the native” (1985, 82). Said questioned the objectivity of the knowledge of the Orient. He argued that such stereotypical representation of the other by the white cannot be in any way objective; because it is produced by human beings who are embedded in colonial history and relationship. In labelling, fixing and denoting the other, the strategies of what Said dubbed Orientalism, the self-constructs asymmetrical and unequal relations between the cultural position of the European and that of the other. The West and the Orient are symmetrical, but the Orient is marked, stereotyped and dehumanized, while the West is not. This has proved to be one of the most efficient devices for the dehumanization of the other (1995).

Ryan argued that Shakespeare’s play *Othello* is a very moving tragedy because:

The destruction of Othello and Desdemona lays bare the barbarity of a culture whose preconceptions about race and gender cannot allow a love like theirs to survive and flourish. The modern significance and value of the play are rooted in this revelation. In loving and marrying each other, Othello and Desdemona instinctively act according to principles of racial equality and

sexual freedom which are far from generally accepted and practised in our own day, let alone in Shakespeare's. As a result, they find unleashed on them, through Iago, the fury of a society whose foundations are rocked by the mere fact of their relationship (Ryan 2002, 83-4).

Ryan eulogised Othello's and Desdemona's free thinking because they married despite social impediments. *Othello*, whether it questions or confirms the principles of racial and social relationships governing the world of Shakespeare and our own, is considered canonical and relevant today.

The race conflict has become more prevalent and it has affected many people across the world. Black people are still being targeted and singled out on the basis of race. For example, in a recent survey done by the Pew Research Center Horowitz, Brown and Cox found out that "more than 150 years after the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in the United States, most U.S. adults say the legacy of slavery continues to have an impact on the position of black people in American society today" (2019, 4). In his article "White Masks in Tunisia", Guesmi lays bare the racism faced by black Tunisian citizens and black immigrants in Tunisia. He argues that

(...) the banalisation of a racial problem in Tunisia is occurring in the shadow of an unfortunate far-reaching misconception among Tunisians that blacks are of an inferior race. Black Tunisians and sub-Saharan immigrants alike are often socially stigmatised and called such derogatory names as wossif (slave) or kahlouch (similar to the n-word). Scenes of blatant anti-black racism include teachers' bullying against black students, street abuse against sub-Saharan immigrants, and police discrimination against the black minority (Guesmi 2017).

Fanon asserted in *Black Skin, White Masks* that whiteness has become a symbol of purity, justice, and truth. It has become the epitome of self-realisation (1986). Shakespeare's *Othello* is very largely concerned with the racial problem. In considering the contemporary relevance of the racial issue discussed in this paper, I argue that Shakespeare's *Othello* is re-canonized for different audiences by being reproduced on different stages. The different

popular performances and the relevance and universality of the issues raised in the play have certainly contributed to its enduring status.

3. CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES AND ATTITUDES THROUGH LANGUAGE

This section focuses on the power of language in Shakespeare's *Othello* and how it is creatively used to construct the characters' identities and shape their attitudes. Iago's use of language shapes his racist attitudes towards Othello. There are concrete examples where Iago uses animal imagery and metaphors to dehumanise him. Through manipulative use, Iago has managed to deceive most of the characters in the play. The imagery and metaphors he uses reflect his racist attitudes toward Othello as a black person and an outsider. This is meant to demonstrate that the racist attitudes of Iago are reflected in the language he uses.

The play is a demonstration of the power of Shakespeare's words and his creative use of language. His characters' identities are constructed through language. While examining Shakespeare's poetics, I found out that he relies heavily on what Owens and Goodman call "verbal suggestiveness". The opening scenes of the play "contain an amazing variety of poetic language and expression, ranging from magnificently formal, elaborately patterned speeches to fast-moving, idiomatic, 'everyday' dialogue" (Owens and Goodman 2004, 108). Shakespeare uses the traditional form of blank verse, which consists of unrhymed iambic pentameters to achieve specific effects. His creativity is reflected in the idiomatic expressions he creates for his characters. For instance, the language Othello and Iago use shows how Shakespeare creates his characters as well as the theme of opposition which is at the core of the play.

In Act I, Scenes 2 and 3, Othello's speeches reveal much about his character. His calm authority in his public presence is revealed when he says: "keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (1.2. 59). Owens and Goodman contend that Othello "could

simply have said “put by your weapons”, or words to that effect, but, instead, Shakespeare gives him this more poetic line.” The fact that swords are ‘bright’ may suggest that “they are ‘unused’ and that the famous soldier, Othello, is mildly contemptuous of these lesser mortals, whose swords have not been stained” (Owens and Goodman 2004, 108).

Through poetic language, Othello defends his elopement with Desdemona and expresses his desire to be with her; if he does not speak persuasively, the “bloody book of law” (1.3.68) may deprive him of his wife. Othello’s rhetorical power is acknowledged by Desdemona, who is seduced by his storytelling. The Duke’s comments on Othello’s language and stories reflect the power of the latter’s language, which allows him to win the heart and mind of Desdemona: “This tale would win my daughter too” (1.3.171). Othello’s and Desdemona’s shared speech patterns reveal their mutual affection and harmony; they are “well tun’d” as Iago expresses (2.1.198) at this point. Othello uses poetic language not only to speak of his love but also to speak of his glory and achievements, thus constructing himself as a great military man.

When Iago starts to manipulate and poison Othello’s mind, the latter’s stately style begins to break down. At this stage, Othello’s words convey his agitation:

Lie with her, lie on her? We say lie on her,
when they belie her! Lie with her, zounds!, that’s
fulsome! – Handkerchief! confessions! handkerchief!
– To confess and be hanged for his labour! First, to be
hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature
would not invest herself in such shadowing passion
without some instruction. It is not words that shakes
me thus. Pish! Noses, ears and lips. Is’t possible?
Confess? handkerchief! O devil! (4.1.33–40)

The lexis and syntax in Othello’s speech reveal his fractured sense of the self. The transformation of Othello from a state of power to that of weakness is conveyed through language. Previously, Othello

used the first and third person to speak about himself, his nobility, and his heroism. However, when he begins to feel insecure, he uses the pronouns “we”, “they”, “his”, “I”, and “me”. The use of questions conveys his insecurity too.

Othello’s measured verse turns into disjointed prose, which reflects his transformation from a state of power to that of fragility. What controls Othello now is passion rather than reason. He starts using oaths “zounds!” which are associated with Iago. “Pish! Noses, ears and lips. Is’t possible? / Confess? handkerchief? O devil!” (4.1.39-40). These lines convey Othello’s degeneration. Desdemona later says, “I understand a fury in your words / But not the words” (4.2.32–3). By this point, he miscomprehends everything she says:

Desdemona: Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?

Othello: Was this fair paper, this most goodly book

Made to write ‘whore’ upon? ... What, committed!

Committed! O thou public commoner!

(4.2.70–73)

Finally, Othello’s inability to understand Desdemona’s honesty led to her murder. When he realises the truth, he regains his elaborate poetic speeches at the end of Act 5. His final speech, “the base Indian” and “the circumcised dog” (5.2.346 -353), points towards the “bloody period” of Othello’s death (5.2.356).

Iago’s power stems from his use of language too. His speech oscillates between prose and verse, according to his different purposes and audiences. He uses asides which convey his cunning and Machiavellian nature. His soliloquies, which reveal his inward feelings and thoughts, strengthen his power. They also convey information for dramatic effect. Shakespeare’s use of figurative language is another significant part of the linguistic power of the play. Light and dark imagery is creatively used in the play to portray the internal qualities of his characters and to draw attention to racism in Elizabethan England. Light and dark are juxtaposed in the Duke’s declaration to Brabantio, that: “if virtue no delighted beauty lack / your son-in-law is far more fair than black” (1.3.287-288).

Black is associated with evil and sin. These stereotypes are linked to black people, simply because of their skin colour. The statement of the Duke is ironic because although Othello is black, he is truthful and his soul is good. The juxtaposition of black and white colours becomes symbolic within the play.

There are repeated racial images which Iago uses to portray Othello. These racial animalistic sexual images would have been the dominant thinking of the Elizabethan audience. Aubrey claimed that blacks were seen as “strange creatures from outside the boundaries of the known world” in Shakespeare’s time (1993, 222). Othello is constructed as a monster. Act One, Scene One of the play abounds with dark and animalistic sexual imagery of him. This suggests that the dramatist is preparing “his readers for the entrance of something not human” (Rose 2008, 26). Wilson pointed out that “Shakespeare was well aware of racial tension in England and included this tension in the play” (2004, 2).

Lakoff and Johnson contended that “metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language”. However, they found “that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (1981, 4). Abuzahra and Salahat, in their analysis of Iago’s speeches, found out that his “use of animal metaphors in *Othello* can be categorised and linked cognitively to his mind and how he thinks of other characters, like Othello Desdemona, Cassio, in animalistic terms and how he describes their actions in comparison to animal behaviours” (2018, 188-89). Iago’s view of race and gender are communicated through metaphors, animalistic sexual imagery and rhetorical devices. Iago is able to manipulate Othello, Roderigo, Cassio, Emilia, Desdemona and her father and to achieve his Machiavellian goals through his linguistic skills.

In Act 1, Scene 1, Iago, in trying to provoke Brabantio by informing him about his daughter’s secret marriage and elopement

with Othello and describes the latter as “an old black ram tuppung (...) the white ewe” Desdemona (1.1.89-90). Abuzahra and Salahat explained that the word “ram” is defined “as a metaphor used to express an over-sexed man or a lecher” (2018, 189). Roderigo depicts Othello as a “lascivious Moor” (1.1.125). Vitkus argued that the “alleged sexual excesses of the Muslims were linked to those of the Moors or black Africans, who are frequently described in the Western tradition as a people naturally given to promiscuity” (1997, 159). Othello is also described as a thief by Iago: “Awake ho, Brabantio! Thieves, thieves! Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags! Thieves, thieves” (1.1.79-82). The “white ewe” is used metaphorically to portray Desdemona as a female sheep among a gang of thieves. Iago, in his attempt to incite Desdemona’s father and knowing that violent words can incite violent actions, uses animalistic imagery which means that Desdemona is now in the hands of the lascivious thief Othello.

Iago informs Brabantio that his daughter is now “covered with a Barbary horse” which is another animal metaphor meant to dehumanise Othello and ignite Desdemona’s father’s rage (1.1.111). If Brabantio doesn’t thwart Othello’s and Desdemona’s marriage, he will have “coursers for cousins, and jennets for Germans” (1.1.113). Jennets are defined as “female donkeys” and “small Spanish horses” (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* 2019). Iago is trying to intensify the anxieties of Brabantio about miscegenation. This threat is the play’s hidden nightmare, which cannot be overcome by Othello’s service to the Venetian state or his arguments about virtue.

4. TEACHING SHAKESPEARE THROUGH INTEGRATING MODERN MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

It is the argument of this paper that Shakespeare’s plays have great relevance for students today. From my own experience as a teacher of English literature, I believe that traditional English works, such

as those of Shakespeare, expose students to language that is vital to their development as readers and writers of Standard English. Many critics and scholars, like Mellor, Patterson and Paquette argue that Shakespeare's works are still relevant today and their relevance emanates from the timelessness and universality of the essential human concerns they address such as love, power, jealousy, hatred, envy, friendship, dis/honesty, anger, sex, violence, war, gender roles, politics, racism, and colonialism. Shakespeare's plays raise important moral and ethical questions, such as conscience and responsibility, which students can explore and learn from. However, the question is how to make Shakespeare relevant and accessible to twenty-first-century students?

Currently, many university teachers should address the problem of lack of motivation and achievement in the traditional classroom. Students' resistance to reading is the major problem faced by teachers of English. Today, many students are very reluctant to read especially traditional texts, which are considered irrelevant to their lives, boring, outdated, and too hard to understand (Tabers-Kwak & Kauffman 2002, 69). Some teachers believe that teaching Shakespeare today is an obsolete idea and hence they suggest removing the traditional canonical texts from the English curriculum in favour of students' selected curriculum. They think that this will increase students' interest and, thereby, achievement (Milburn 2002, 75). However, as Arpajian-Jolley argued, the implementation of students' selected reading will not necessarily increase their interest in reading or improve their academic performance. For Arpajian-Jolley "the best way to interest seniors in Shakespeare's work, or any classic literature, is to show how relevant it is to modern life" (Arpajian-Jolley 2009, 73).

Kettle asserted that literature is relevant to life and, in his assertion, he put his finger on the root of the canon debate. He argued that "it is impossible to evaluate literature in the abstract. A book is neither produced nor read in a vacuum and the very word 'value' involves right away criteria which are not just 'literary'. Literature is a part of life and can be judged only by its relevance to

life. Life is not static but moving and changing” (Kettle 1983, 12). According to him, the value and importance of literature emanate not only from its artistic merit, or its author’s status, but also from the pleasure of reading, the new ideas the characters and situations conjure, and the fresh insights and perceptions about life it opens up. Kettle reminded us that because life keeps changing, it follows that literature as well as our ideas about its value, relevance, and canonical status keep changing too. He refers to life as “changing”, and, for this reason, he considers plays as the closest genre to life because of their performance, the changing scenes, the speech, and the chronotypes they involve. This confirms the idea that literature is changing and alive, which is of particular relevance to this study of Shakespeare’s *Othello*.

The students’ exposure to ideas and language available in canonical literature can be beneficial and fruitful. Of these canonical texts, Shakespeare’s works are among the most frequently required and consistently taught in the English Departments in the world. However, because Shakespeare’s works are among the most frequently resisted by university students who find his works incomprehensible and his ideas inaccessible, this paper proposes that teachers change their methods to bring new relevance to the traditional canon and render them accessible for students rather than abandon the use of difficult, canonised texts. We propose, therefore, the integration of technology and modern media in the teaching of literature in general, and traditional texts in particular, to effectively engage students in the timely, culturally relevant, and integrated study of the works of Shakespeare.

I contend that the incorporation of technology in the teaching of literature will increase students’ engagement, learning, and achievement. Teachers should strive to make canonical texts accessible and relevant. An effective use of technology is a noteworthy way to make Shakespeare accessible and relevant to students. Technology is the best way to bridge the gap between the bard’s works and students with literacy skills. Baines argues that new technologies, which allow rapid exchange of information, and the

emphasis on oral and visual media, have rendered traditional teaching methods both limiting and academically inadequate in the eyes of students today (Baines 1997, 194). Therefore, today's students need a visually stimulating and fast-paced learning environment, which will encourage them to develop and acquire different skills that are needed and applicable in the modern world.

The incorporation of modern media and technologies in the teaching of literary texts will help students connect what they learn with their lives outside of the classroom. The integration of these modern technologies is also useful for teachers. For example, they can create slideshow presentations on different technologies that could be used in the teaching of *Othello* or any other traditional texts. YouTube, for instance, contains many videos and productions of Shakespeare's works, which vary in interpretation of the texts, quality, and cultural adaptation. There are also several social media sites and blogs where students can comment and discuss any literary texts online, whether inside or outside of the classroom.

Teachers can blend old and new methods to bridge the gap between what students know and what they have yet to learn. Technology-based teaching methods are beneficial and motivating for students today. In this era of technology and rapid exchange of information, students need new and innovative methods and teachers can use modern media and technologies to motivate their students and meet the requirements of the new age. Even older teachers who may not/cannot use technology, need to be trained in the newest social media platforms, video-based websites and others to meet the new demands. In the case of teaching Shakespeare or any other traditional or contemporary literary texts, students deserve to be allowed to enjoy his plays through a combination of the most effective and engaging teaching methods.

In order to successfully engage students and motivate them to learn today, teachers should make classical literature accessible and relevant to their lives. The use of modern media and technology includes modern film adaptations to engage students in the study of traditional literature. This inclusion reflects the way students today

produce, receive, and seek new information.

Hett argues that the use of internet-based research and applicable websites as part of literary study is central to classroom technology and media integration (Hett 2002, 94). For instance, there are many online free sources such as the online *Folger Shakespeare Library*, that teachers can use to provide students with a plethora of information and possible research topics. There are also many audio-visual materials in the form of podcasts and YouTube videos. This paper suggests that teachers should use both guided and independent online research activities to grab students' interest in the subject matter and promote inquiry. Teachers can also include appropriate, pre-existing websites, in traditional literary study.

Bowman and Pieters believe that “technology supports content, critical, and creative thinking” and that “information literacy requires students to conduct searches, evaluate, and create new ideas” (Bowman and Pieters 2002, 89). Therefore, technology helps teachers create an environment in which students are fully motivated and engaged in higher-order thinking skills. Teachers can use modern adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. For example, Jordan Peele's film *Get Out* can be used to learn the intertextual connections between the movie and Shakespeare's *Othello*, which share clear thematic and narrative patterns. Moreover, teachers can use Wiki software, which is another technological tool with tremendous potential for authentic learning. Wikis often display visual materials such as pictures, text and streaming videos and they provide links to many other websites which offer historical, social contexts, and critical essays. Wikis “work effectively to connect students outside of academic discourse with each other” (Farabaugh 2007, 45). Teachers should not resist technology; they can use it for the benefit of their students.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have proposed an alternative reading of Shakespeare's *Othello*. A reading which refutes most of the critics'

conservative interpretation of the play's racial theme. The paper showed that Shakespeare does not endorse the existing racial hierarchies of his time, but attempts to question and destabilise them. Shakespeare's dramatic strategy rebutted racism and subverted the racist outlook by reversing the central roles of the play and turning Iago, the white Venetian, into the villain and Othello, the Moor and stereotyped villain, into the noble hero. Also, the paper examined the power of Shakespeare's language in shaping the characters' selves and their attitudes. The topical issue of race and racism, as well as the creative use of language, have contributed to the re-canonisation and relevance of Shakespeare's *Othello* today. Whether Shakespeare's *Othello* succeeds in challenging the principles of social and racial relationship governing his world and our own or whether it is divided against itself, questioning and consolidating the *status quo* on different levels will remain open to debate.

Shakespeare's durability is often attributed to his language. The paper focused mainly on how the metaphors and animal imagery used by Iago reflect his racist attitudes towards Othello. However, the unique qualities of Shakespeare's language do not stem only from metaphors and animal imagery but also from rhymes, repetitions, puns, rhetorical questions, and many other figures of speech and variations which are creatively used and combined to make the reading and experience of the story deeply satisfying.

In addition, the paper proposed an alternative method of teaching Shakespeare's plays and traditional literature in general. The integration of modern media and technology in the classroom today has a tremendous potential for authentic learning and its implementation is highly required to meet the needs of today's learners. The paper attempted to deconstruct the wrong assumptions about reading and teaching Shakespeare in the twenty-first century. Shakespeare's works are still relevant and they can be made accessible to students through technology. Therefore, the paper attempts to take Shakespeare out of the dock. Literature should not be neglected by students and future technocrats; they should know its value and practical uses. This is the only way to

respond to the needs of our society and prevent the supposed death of this discipline.

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