

OTHELLO'S BLACKNESS AS THE LUXURY OF WHITE: EXPLORING RACIAL INNOCENCE IN SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO

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Abstract:

This research paper explores whiteness as a dominant ideology that remains invisible in Shakespeare's Othello while projecting Othello's blackness as a visible fact of life. Racial ignorance, or white innocence, functions as an epistemological position that marginalizes non-white races, and Shakespeare deliberately sustains this innocence in the play. Set in a white-dominated environment, the play's aesthetic achievement is inseparable from the blackness of Othello. Without the presence of racialized Blackness, the supremacy of whiteness would remain unmarked; thus, Othello's blackness grants visibility to the superiority of white identity. Drawing on theories of whiteness, this study argues that the absence of explicit whiteness is central to Shakespeare's dramatization, shaping social and political identities within the play's world. The research further enables students to interrogate Shakespeare's politics of identity formation, offering insight into the mechanisms through which dominant culture emerges in his works. Ultimately, the study reveals how societal structures are regulated by racial regimes, with Shakespeare reinforcing the superiority of whiteness through the blackness of characters like Othello.

Key Words: Othello, Shakespeare, Race, Racial Innocence, Blackness, Whiteness, Superior, Identity

Introduction:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the element of racial innocence in Shakespeare's works in order to draw the attention of readers to hidden aspects of Shakespeare. It mainly focuses on *Othello* that incorporates racial innocence through the use of language, cultural artifacts, and white determined environment above all. Using George Yancy's concepts of racial theory, the study examines *Othello*'s plot thoroughly to explore the elements of racial innocence and how these elements make whiteness universal color of superiority. In exploring these elements the research will enhance our understanding of race and racial theory, it will also draw our attention to the fact that how, canonical text serve as document to draw binaries within humans on the basis of color and creed. Ambereen Dadabhoy in her book, *Anti-Racist Shakespeare* (2023) defines racial innocence that it is unfamiliarity with the knowledge of how race works in society, further she calls it a "... willful ignorance, a deliberate position of not knowing..." (25), it gives freedom to dominant groups for deliberate exploitation. George Yancy, argues that white people maintain dutifully this racial innocence from beginning, it is a social and historic practice, which gives them luxury to enjoy the superiority of race. The

purpose of this study is to contribute to the discourse of race and racial violence in Shakespeare's works and fill a significant void in the existing literature on Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare has long been investigated as a universal dramatist for all nations because of the themes of love, jealousy and hatred in his plays. But a closer look to his plays unveils a new story of race and racial violence which introduces us a new Shakespeare who upholds and strengthens racist beliefs. The study aims to examine his play, *Othello*, and investigates how white supremacy is shown through a black man's blackness. The main focus of the study is to explore how blackness of Othello is used to articulate white man's supremacy and how whiteness needed blackness to be superior race. By using the racial theories of Yancy and Dadabhoy, study examines how white innocence perpetuates white superiority. Yancy's idea of white gaze helps us to investigate the invisibility of whiteness in the play. Othello's blackness has long been the focus of research but element of racial innocence gives us a new understanding of hidden whiteness in the play. According to the given definition of racial innocence, the visibility of blackness and invisibility of whiteness serve as a location of "otherness" in *Othello*. The ultimate goal of this research is to advance knowledge of how literature play critical role in shaping the behaviors of people within the society.

Research Questions

1. How does Shakespeare's portrayal of the black race in *Othello* reinforce white innocence and racial ignorance?
2. In what ways does the play's white-determined environment contribute to the marginalization of non-white characters?
3. How does the absence of whiteness in *Othello* affect social and political identities within the play?
4. What role does the blackness of Othello play in reinforcing the superiority of the white race?

Literature Review:

Kader Mutlu investigates in his article; "Racism in *Othello*" that Shakespeare's *Othello* is a document to study the effects of race and racism on the lives of people. According to the researcher, racism is destructive and unavoidable which shatters happy identity of people and Shakespeare's use of race has flaming effects on Elizabethan society. By applying Derrida's concept of Language, researcher argues that language used in *Othello* is emphasizing otherness within the play, through the use of insulting language black race is the victim of racial violence. Mutlu states, "The play, *Othello*, has a harmony of racism"(136) , according to researcher this harmony is achieved through the use of insulting language, the phenomenon of black devoid you from all the goodness of the world. You are evil, if you belong to any race other than white. Research explains that race of Othello gives birth to many devilish plans of Iago and others which cause tragedy of Othello. This extreme otherness, according to researcher, alienates Othello from his mental faculties and then the tragedy occurs. Researcher concludes that the tragedy of Othello is the result of his resentment of his roots, and the resentment is created through the racial violence which effects psychology of Othello.

Andrew Stesienko in his essay studies *Othello* by using the lens of racial tensions and the presence of Moor into the European society. In his essay, he discussed the two monsters in Shakespeare's *Othello*, first one is Iago and other is Othello. According to the essayist, at the end of the play Iago has no resentment, although he acts as a monstrous character, but Othello is guilty of his actions. He states that Othello's guilt is due to his race, blackness and racial tensions. He argues that first reason behind Othello's downfall is his blackness, which overlooks

all other personality traits of Othello. Due to his black color, Othello is unable to adopt social changes accordingly, and Iago manipulates him through his inferior understanding of his black color. He states about Iago and Othello, “both characters are broadly identical in their monstrous essentiality but are perceived as radically different from one another because of tangential factors like skin color or personal mannerisms”(95). Here essayist differentiates between Othello and Iago, not on the basis of actions but on the basis of race and color. He concludes that Othello’s physical appearance creates suspicion in his personality while Iago’s native identity, being from white race, conceals all his guilt. This dichotomy of the essayist marks Iago as a monster, but a superior one while Othello is a bad monster. He concludes that Iago is appreciated among audience despite his amorality while Othello is not admired due to his dichotomy of physical and internal self. Essayist ignores all other actions of Iago and Othello and gives his appreciation on the basis of color and race, as Iago’s whiteness allows him to be villain yet praised, Othello’s blackness conceals all his good actions and marks him black villain.

Ambereen Dadabhoy in her book, *Shakespeare through Islamic Worlds*, deals with Shakespeare’s representation of moors in chapter three of the book states that Shakespeare’s creation of Moor in his plays not only deals with skin color but offer a comprehensive understanding of race, religion and cultural alienation. According to Dadabhoy, Othello’s portrayal depicts the curiosity and uneasiness of early modern Europe with colored races providing a deeper analysis of relationship between colonial development and cross cultural interchange in Othello. She argues that Othello is depicted religiously and racially inferior in the play, a falling prey to Iago which marks the power dynamics in play through racial differences of Othello and other characters. According to Dadabhoy, Othello gains success in white society but his racial diversity caused him to be the subject of Iago. She states that Othello’s character is consistent with the trends observable in the portrayal of the Moors in early modern English literature, who were often depicted as racially and religiously inferior, and later on, in the Othello by Shakespeare himself. To put it another way, the likes of Aaron in Titus Andronicus and the Prince of Morocco are familiar portrayals of Othello. She argues, “Both of Shakespeare’s Venetian plays feature characters whose religious and racial identities trouble the normative whiteness and Christianness of that society. Unlike the Prince of Morocco who is an outsider to Belmont, Othello is a cultural insider (150).” She concludes this chapter by stating that Othello’s traits are lost in the praise and admiration he receives from superior race and becomes a social currency for many characters in the play.

Ruma explores the sociopolitical background of Venice, a city state run by a republican council of noblemen in the seventeenth century. Through venetian society’s hierarchical structure non Europeans like Othello are marginalized in the play and researcher further argues that despite his bravery and dedication to the city, Othello is not allowed to fully integrate into venetian society. Ruma also highlights the dichotomy in Othello’s personality: his race always mark him an outcast and he is also hailed as a war hero. The research explores how social conventions and individual behavior interact in the play. Ruma argues that it is the result of social order of the venetian society that Iago, Roderigo, and Barbantio abuses him on racial grounds. Ruma argues that blackness of Othello influence his character, makes him evil, and Shakespeare complicates the issue of race by giving him noble position in the start of the drama. Moreover, Iago’s and Rodrego’s hate for Othello stems from the fact that despite being black he has married with a white girl. He states, “This inter-racial marriage may not in reality be possible

in the seventeenth century” (34). Ruma argues that Othello’s Blackness becomes central theme of the tragedy and a cause of racial discrimination.

Theoretical Framework:

Dadabhoy in his book , *Anti-Racist Shakespeare (2023)* in which she argues that racial literacy is a necessary framework for students to understand the issues of race, racism and racial formation in the plays of Shakespeare. To define racial literacy Dadabhoy quotes the definition of racial literacy given by France Winddance Twine that racial literacy gives us a ground to analyze how white members negotiate with race, racism and racialization in their white determined environments. Yancy in his work *Black Bodies, White Gazes (2017)* argues, “white gazing is a specific historical practice, socially collective and inter-subjective, a process that is dutifully maintained” (243). In other words white gazing is consciously or unconsciously enacted historically which marks white race as universal through the blackness of colored race. Yancy argues that whiteness becomes a transcendental norm, an embodiment of truth, light and virtue. It is white innocence, willfully employed by Shakespeare, that without making visible whiteness in his plays, through the lie, darkness and irrational visibility of colored people, he makes whiteness a universal norm. In the universal truth of white superiority, Yancy argues that there is lie in whiteness, “lie is that the Black body is night, doom, darkness, and danger; it is deceptive and devious; it is a site of vice and moral depravity (245)”. So, the whiteness purity is pure lie in itself because it “reduces the Black body to a wretched particularity.” (245). Whiteness is visible in history as virtue because since known racial history ‘black’ is associated with evil and devil in European discourses, more importantly ‘black’ is not color rather everything which is not white is black. This sense of blackness is the result of white determined environment which comes after racial innocence of white people.

Yancy argues that there is no such thing as historically constituted identity but human being has agency to challenge societal identities. To be a subject makes you set in an ‘historical facticity’ which is nearly impossible to break while white innocence of Shakespeare makes black a historically constituted subject. Black subject has no agency to alter this historicity and this historical constitution of black gives a luxury to white people, a luxury of governance. Baldwin argues, “history is literally present in all that we do” (qtd. in Yancy 05), through the dialogues of white, in Shakespeare plays, blacks are linked with specific universal qualities which turn them into a subject of white determined environment. Without these qualities it is difficult for Shakespeare to portray white as distinct race. Yancy states, “whiteness is a site of power, an assemblage of “knowledge,” and an effective history, it does not follow that white people are determined or devoid of agency qua white, that there is no space for counter-iterative, white antiracist practices”(255). If we analyze Shakespeare using the lens of Yancy we get this idea that whiteness comes through blackness, if there is no black then there is no white supremacy.

Dadabhoy argues, “Shakespeare’s texts perform ideological work by authorizing knowledge about race through the construction and representation of who is and is not human via forms of somatic difference.” (03). It means that the difference on the basis of bodily bases is intentionally created by the monument of English Literature to mark the superiority of his race by showing black people inferior. It is not easy to claim superiority over other race directly, but when you start labeling someone with negative qualities your hidden intention is to mark yourself superior. Shakespeare’s hidden white innocence licensed him to create an environment in his plays which supports white superiority. According to Dadabhoy , Shakespeare is using racial innocence intentionally to speak about the superiority of his race, apparently we see

blackness of a character but motive behind this blackness is to show whiteness. She argues that racial literacy is a way to decode whiteness in order to make them visible, to critique them and to change them. Dadabhoy argues that students and teachers of Shakespeare's plays must develop a lens to decipher codes of race because without whiteness racial literacy is incomplete. If racial codes are deciphered in Shakespeare's plays then we can see that how invisibility of whiteness in Shakespeare is a blessing for white race, because the process of decoding makes white race visible to examine.

According to Yancy, whiteness is not a single identity but it is a combination of different forces that are interconnected with each other. These inter linked forces inhabit every aspect of white man's life, "possessing the power to make themselves representative (179)". Through the representation, Yancy argues, certain practices "exist independently of human action", and this existing makes certain values as natural occurring of the world, it makes a social context in which, "black people struggle with white identity orders, orders that socio-historically speak to efforts on the part of whites to make sense of themselves through the denigration of Black people. (179)". For instance the constant practice to emphasize on whiteness and marking blackness ugly becomes a norm after sometime, and this practice of racial violation is accepted as ahistorical and universal. The environment of white is good and black is bad, is the result of this ahistorical practice, and it gives wrong whiteness's knowledge of itself. Through this practice whites and blacks inherent some myths, for instance blacks are ugly, blacks have mentally and physically distorted form, and vice versa. But important question here is, as Yancy asks, "What created in them the belief that they were ugly? If the ugliness does not belong to them, then to whom does it belong? (178)". The answer is simple, white man's innocence is the result of white determined environment and these myths are the outcome of white man's innocence of race, or due to their intentionally practiced racial violence. This racial violence leads to the fact which Yancy also argues in his book that they form a tape to measure the souls of mankind and the tape says, "whiteness is onto-logically and aesthetically supreme" (180).

The transfixing power of whiteness, the absolute weight and use of language to maintain power is clear in *Othello*, as Iago introduces black Othello to the readers by attributing negative adjectives with him. The question important to ask is that who gave power to Iago to use such language while talking about a non-white character and the answer is obvious, playwright. After so much tension created by Iago, Othello is unable to comprehend the situation, what is the reason behind all this? His inability to understand the situation is not problematic but the thing which is important to note here is his dependence on Iago, who is from white race. What Othello see in Iago? And why does Othello feel sense of internal hollowness when taking counseling from Iago? The answer to all these questions is the due the difference of race created by Shakespeare within the play. It is not only this but later on we read that Othello has killed Desdemona, which is the result of white man's innocence, because it gives right of feeling supreme and universal. So if we conclude the whole play by saying that Othello's blackness represents what Iago's whiteness is not.

Racial Innocence:

Race and its discussions involve only non-white race while race issues are specified for colored people. The process of systematic racism is the product of 'whiteness as normal' which gives a specific privilege to white race in the discussions of race. Due to white racial framework, whiteness has become a norm on the contrary colored race is always considered problematic. "Race becomes the remit of non-whiteness" (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 26) and Dadabhoy

further states that racial ignorance is a luxury that is achieved through oppression because oppressed subjects have no other option but to accept the dominant perspective. Whiteness has a privilege to shape social norms of race and due to this privilege of supreme race, whiteness gets a dominant space. In Shakespeare's works whiteness is treated as a supreme quality because his all works inhibit white determined environment in which racial ignorance of white characters is a luxury given to them by Shakespeare intentionally. "White ignorance paradoxically becomes a position of power", states Dadbhoy, and through which white people govern and holds a powerful position over the lives of colored people that help them to, "maintain a position of racial innocence" (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 25). In this context, if we examine Shakespeare's *Othello*, the character of Iago plays a significant role as he is the most innocent (Racial innocence) character of the play along with all white characters. In the first act of the play, Iago states "Were I the Moor I would not be Iago" (Shakespeare 1.1.64). He also defines his self-image, "I know my price, I am worth no worse a place (Shakespeare 1.1.10). If we examine his second statement, Iago expresses his worthy identity of being white and as he is white he deserves better place for himself. Because he is not 'Moor' as first statement goes, that's why he is Iago. Iago here represent the luxury, which is termed as 'Racial innocence' by Dhadboy, a privilege of being superior. In the start of the play we observe a dominant construction of white race, where being white means to deserve better and vice versa. It is very interesting to note the difference of introductions, as Othello is introduced as a 'thick lipped', 'Moor', and black while Iago knows his worth. The difference of introductions of both these characters is the result of racial innocence of Iago through which whiteness achieves a supreme pedestal and blackness is inferior, as Iago states 'Were I the moor', it means that being colored folk is not equal to being Iago, here Iago is the symbol of whiteness. It resonates with Dhadboy's idea that white supremacy shapes white imaginary in this way that it marks them superior in racial hierarchy which ultimately makes black people lower in the hierarchy. As the hierarchy has been established, now it will function smoothly without any internal challenges. The outcome of this process in Dhadaboy's words is, "The racial hierarchy, then, is a social, legal, and political structure as well as an epistemological one" (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 25).

Racial innocence is point of enjoyment for white people, it makes them prejudice for colored races too. In their luxury of racial innocence, white people consider evil to be black because to get light and goodness you should have whiteness. Whiteness gives you license of goodness and by using the license you make all colored people barbarian. The license also gives a habit of being superior which makes whiteness universally fair. Now, if we examine Iago's character when he says, "Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk" (Shakespeare 2.1.127). It suggests that being 'Turks' are inhuman or evil while they are good. Shakespeare deliberately adopts this stance to make his nation superior than the Turks, because writing has power to shape your minds. And where Shakespeare like white people are spreading such lessons regarding race, you cannot expect equal behaviors in the Elizabethan society among common masses. Dhadaboy states that knowledge of race determines superiority or inferiority of race among people of the society but as Iago is constantly mentioning colored people as evil it also give white people sense of superiority. When Cassio and Rodreigo are quarelling, Othello reminds them their whiteness by saying,

Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites? (Shakespeare 2.3.182-83)

It is the result of racial innocence of Iago that Othello, who belongs to colored race, also admits that being 'Turk' means to be a barbarian and whites are civilized as they don't quarrel with each other. It is due to constitution of racial ideology in a certain given surroundings, as Yancy argues that white gaze reconstitutes ideas of race in such a way that belonging to colored race means a shameful act. He further argues that white gaze has become a "ritual performance" and it is "inextricably bound up with objectifying and eroticizing" (Yancy 192), black race. It is white man's racial innocence which inscribes certain codes to colored race which gives them a pedestal of less importance than the whites. This act of racial ignorance is done intentionally by writers like Shakespeare while ordinary characters of the society unintentionally internalize this racial innocence. White color people are invested deeply into this kind of whiteness, as Yancy argues, "historically been and currently are invested psychologically and morally in this kind of whiteness", constantly juxtaposing to those colored people in such a way that white is always a magical category, "that names, fixes, and substantiates their ontological superiority and special status" (Yancy 20). Racial innocence is so much internalized in characters of Shakespeare that they consider colored race is naturally inferior and less rational. Desdemona comments on Othello's irrational behavior with her that his irrationality is due to his environment where he is brought up as a child.

I think the sun where he was born

Drew all such humors from him. (Shakespeare 3.4.32-33)

All humors are drawn by the sun from Othello means the environmental conditions of colored race don't allow them to be what white man is. Desdemona's comment suggests white man's 'historical truth' that colored people have no rational sense, the binary of white and black is natural one where former is the superior while later one is inferior. White woman's innocence in this comment is obvious that colored people are not natural people; they are lacking something in every aspect of life. This Desdemonian ignorance of non-humorous Othello is produced by Shakespeare intentionally which elevates white man's status as humorous and civilized. Desdemona's view of Othello is the result of constant racial ignorance of white people which emphasize whiteness is natural way of being; it is the outcome of white determined environment which is discussed following in detail.

White Determined Environment:

Michael Foucault writes, "every regime of representation is a regime of power formed" (44), similarly those Shakespeare's plays which involve black character form a certain environment of representation where whiteness holds the power and blackness accepts the power. In *Othello* Shakespeare form a white determined environment where black Othello was subjected to white power that invested him, marked him and forced him to perform various tasks which make Othello's occupation more tragic. Yancy argues, "whiteness is fundamentally predicated upon a world within which whites understand their being white (and the ethical, aesthetic, and legal benefits that accrue) as an "unconditioned" state of being. (127)". White supremacy according to Yancy is historically problematic, white self and black other binary marks a dichotomy within society as Shakespeare carries this dichotomy in portraying all white characters civilized and well learned, praising England for its civility, elevating being white and pointing all goodness in white. In *Othello*, introductory adjectives are notable as Cassio is introduced,

Forsooth, a great arithmetician,

One Michael Cassio,... (Shakespeare 1.1. 20-21)

All white characters are introduced as learned because being white is ‘unconditioned state’ of being which gives whiteness right to rule. Shakespeare’s Cassio, serving in Army, is great arithmetician symbolizes that England is a learned society. At one other place, Desdemona says to her father,

To you I am bound for life and education

My life and education both do learn me, (Shakespeare 1.3. 209-212)

Desdemona leaves her father for black Othello is another story but here if we closely analyze her good bye lines to Barbantio, we come to know that white father has fulfilled his duty, Desdemona is an educated daughter, and England’s environment gives rise to respectable citizens. Here whiteness is visible as civilized and learned race, Yancy argues, “Acts of performing whiteness are interpreted both as forms of flight from agency or alternative ways of conceptualizing or narrating one’s being-in-the-world and as ways that whites construct themselves as subjects in relation to those (in this case, Black bodies) who are thereby constructed as “things.” (127). Desdemona’s dialogues establish her superior upbringing where she gets education not like black Othello where sun extracts all goodness from him. Cassio’s learnings and Desdemona’s education gives a cultural superiority to whites and such ontology of English society is ontology of differences, Yancy calls it an ideology of whiteness conceived as natural ideology. Yancy further argues that such differences create hegemony of white, through whiteness; a black fantasy is created regarding immoral blacks to stable whites’ moral and clean identity. The result of this white determined environment is obvious as Yancy says, “whiteness assumes the authority to marginalize other identities, discourses, perspectives, and voices (143)”. That’s why Iago is right when he says,

Now, sir, be judge yourself

Whether I in any just term am affined To love the Moor (Shakespeare 1.1.40-43)

Whiteness constitutes itself as a site of universal goodness and absolute righteous, and they have right to disguise evil, despite this fact that evil is also their own creation. It is universally acknowledged that Iago is not bound to love moor because Iago is from civilized race while Othello belongs to a place where sun extracts all goodness from him.

Whiteness Visible:

Othello is marked as an evil thing in the start of the play, when Iago and Rodreigo create an evil image in the mind of Barbantio. This creation is successful through the visibility of blackness while whiteness is invisible although present. To make invisible whiteness visible, we have to rely on blackness because whiteness is achieved through the visibility of blackness. The black body has been historically used to mark white supremacy and to make white body self-sufficient black inferiority has been the constant way. In *Othello* whiteness is invisible yet present and giving a constant message in the words of Yancy, “many Blacks no doubt came to think of whiteness as the property of great souls and great minds (143)”. Barbantio’s following remarks make whiteness visible,

Of years, of country, credit, everything,

To fall in love with what she feared to look on! (Shakespeare 1.3.115-116)

‘What she feared to look on’, is the whole thesis of whites since ages, it is not only Barbantio who thinks that blacks are not able to look upon them but it is a ‘universal truth’ for whites. The stance of ‘not to look’ is achieved through the white determined environment as discussed in above section. As a white person, this is Barbantio’s existential standpoint, his inheritance and his superiority that informs him to disguise blacks. Whiteness remains always

invisible; it does not speak for itself, as Russell Ferguson, "In our society dominant discourse never tries to speak its own name. Its authority is based on absence" (qtd. in Yancy 83). When Barbantio hears about her daughter, he says,

This accident is not unlike my dream.

Belief of it oppresses me already.

Light, I say, light! (Shakespeare 1.1.158-60)

'Light, I say, Light, is very symbolic here because Desdemona's act of loving Othello is the absence of her whiteness, and the cause of oppression for Barbantio is the absence this whiteness, it is unbearable for him. Dhadabhoy also comments on this situation, "Othello establishes the play's racial foundation through its demonization and dehumanization of Blackness which tacitly forge the opposite qualities in whiteness (18)". Whiteness is much visible now in Barbantio's stance against Black Othello.

To classify some groups or people,

you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse,

you'll have your nephews neigh to you,

you'll have coursers for cousins and jennets for Germans. (Shakespeare 1.1.23-27)

Iago's whiteness is visible when he threatens Barbantio by the coming of his nephews and next generation. Here we come across a new fact of white supremacy that they believe evil transfers from one generation to the other, Like Oedipus tragedy is the result of his father's wrong doing, and similarly next generation from Desdemona will be evil due to Othello. Othello's blackness is not only his blackness rather it will transfer into next and it will contaminate whiteness of White. Here again superiority of whiteness is on higher pedestal while, 'barbary horse' is the name given to Black Othello. Ambreen Dhadboy rightly mentions, "Whiteness is invisible and individuated. Non-whiteness is visible and collective (08)". Othello's titles like barbary horse, thick lipped, moor, etc gives a critical examination of the fact, "whiteness articulates itself and secures its boundaries and borders through difference (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 18)".

Dehumanizing Power of Whiteness:

To live in white determined environment is a constant struggle, as I have discussed in above three sections, a struggle with self and those around you. As Yancy argues that it is complete process which builds inferiority with in you which helps whiteness to inflict violence. Whiteness got a high pedestal through the process as Othello transformed into an inhuman being in the last act. Before this inhumanity Othello accepts his blackness and approves whiteness in these words, "My very noble and approved good masters (Shakespeare 1.3.92)". Whiteness achieved nobility and acceptance through the complete process of racial innocence and white determined environment. It is the result of that process that Iago advices Desdemona and Emilia that only fairness or wit is not enough to be Nobel or perhaps accepted, you should find whiteness as well to get nobility:

If she be black, and thereto have a wit,

She'll find a white that shall her blackness hit. (Shakespeare 2.1. 147-48)

You are not complete good until you are white, whiteness is a license to achieve highness because to measure goodness within white determined environment, first scale is your white race. The dialogues of these characters not only form a plot for audience but also give a sense of superiority in white audience about their race. Then the audience sitting here thinks that it is their right to rule the world, to dehumanize slaves and to civilize all colored races. Yancy is right in

his statement that world of whiteness is very threatening because, “whiteness makes tyrants out of human beings”(236), as we have the example of Othello and how he is transformed into an irrational beast. Yancy argues that whiteness occludes other bodies to being and other voices from speaking and narcissism of whiteness is burden of history upon mankind. That is the reason Othello says, “I have a pain upon my forehead, here (Shakespeare 3.3.326)”. The pain of inferiority is hard to bear which metamorphosed you into a tyrant who kills his love without thinking. It is the result of historical bankruptcy of whiteness, as Yancy argues, it is white man’s narcissist behavior which transforms human being into beasts and gives them right to rule over beasts. Shakespeare’s Othello gives blame to a handkerchief, “That’s a fault. That handkerchief (Shakespeare 3.4.65)”. But it is not right to accept his inhumanity of killing Desdemona due to a mere handkerchief, it has no power to create such catastrophe but inferiority of blackness has power to do. The whiteness has power to transform you into beast through their inhuman treatment.

Conclusion:

The use of Shakespeare's Othello provides a rich lens through which to explore racial innocence and the construction of whiteness as a dominant ideology. This paper shows that the blackness of Othello is not merely a characteristic but a functional tool used to sustain and maintain white supremacy. By incorporating racial ignorance, or "white innocence," into the tapestry of the narrative, Shakespeare cements the invisibility of whiteness, and makes Othello's blackness the defining contrast that affirms white superiority. By using George Yancy's racial theories and Ambereen Dadabhoy's concept of racial innocence, the research makes clear how Othello develops a racial hierarchy in which whiteness needs blackness to establish its power. The study shows how Shakespeare's portrayal of Othello in a white-determined environment exposes the societal structures that marginalize and "other" non-white characters, reflecting broader societal practices of racial subjugation. Critical analysis of these racialized dynamics will enhance our understanding of how canonical texts such as Othello contribute to the perpetuation of systemic racism by normalizing the invisibility of whiteness and the hyper-visibility of blackness. Furthermore, this inquiry draws attention to the importance of literature as a tool that molds societal perception of race, identity, and power. Shakespeare's Othello not only is one of the dramatic masterpieces but also, importantly, one of the commentaries against racial politics. Hence, it is necessary to read his plays critically in consideration of race theory. Unraveling these untold stories the work further enriches the discourse over race and challenges to the recognition of literary canons on more equitable terms.

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