

MOORS' REPRESENTATION IN SHAKESPEARE DRAMA: OTHERING AND ROMANCE EXOGAMY

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Abstract

This research work intended to undertake a study on the representation of the Moors in Shakespeare drama and his use of romance to tell stories which shaped early modern identities in the scene of cross-cultural encounter. In The Merchant of Venice (1600), Anthony and Cleopatra (1608), Othello (1622) and The Tempest (1623), the Moor characters are portrayed as others because of their origins and skin colour. Romance exogamy is invoked in Othello and Anthony and Cleopatra, deformed in The Tempest, and refused in The Merchant of Venice in order to convey the western view of the Moors at that time. To achieve my purpose, I had recourse to Edward Said's Orientalism (1978), where he surveys the history and nature of the Western attitudes towards the Orient. In addition to Benedict S. Robinson's Islam and Early Modern English Literature, The Politics of Romance from Spenser to Milton (2007). The latter is used to denote that the romance Moor is a crucial figure for thinking about some of the widest boundaries of identity and some of the most long-term transformations in how identities were imagined and narrated.

Keyword: Drama, Moors, Other, Romance Exogamy, Shakespeare

1. INTRODUCTION

"The Orient since antiquity has been a place of exotic romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences..." (Said, 1978:5). The fascination of the Orient exercised a great influence on the western writings, demonstrating their curiosity and desire for more details about the exotic "Other". This fascination is well demonstrated during the English

Renaissance, a period when playwrights created Moor characters in their dramas. As Shakespeare fashions Moors from the materials of his culture, he creates plays espied with Moor characters, Othello, The Tempest, and The Merchant of Venice and Cleopatra in Anthony and Cleopatra, whose differences reflect the discrepancies and contradictions within those materials.

One theme consistently reemployed throughout Shakespeare's plays is that of the "Other" who is usually characterized as a character that is somehow separated, or noted as being different from the "Self". For the Elizabethan England of Shakespeare's time, it was a way of legitimating and a justification of colonialism. The image of the Moor is potentially revealed as absolutely "Other" through romance exogamy. This genre estranges the world it represents, suffusing its landscapes with wonder, with the marvelous or the miraculous. The encounter with Moors within the plays shape the readers' way of thinking about identity and difference. "Chivalric" romance within the plays reflects the Queen Elizabeth who conducted her political life according to its codes, imagining service to the state as knightly service to a lady (Orgel cited in Benedict: 2007). As one way of studying the Shakespeare's Moors as the "Other", Emily C. Bartels (1990) argues that the Moor is a figure who was becoming increasingly visible within English society in person and in print, particularly in descriptions of Africa, in travel narratives, and on the stage. While blackness and "Mohammedism" were stereotyped as evil, Renaissance representations of the Moor were vague, varied, inconsistent, and contradictory (C. Bartels, 1990:434). In his turn, Christopher Miller (1985) points out that the Moor was characterized alternately and sometimes simultaneously in contradictory extremes, as noble or monstrous, civil or savage (Miller, 1985). Since Othello is the one given the major or heroic role, Ania Loomba (2002) states that within this play dwells the convergence of discourses of

Moorish "difference" which circulated in Shakespeare's time, reminding us that "race" is not a homogeneous or articulated category. But one that develops by drawing, often arbitrarily and contradictorily, upon traditional notions as well as newer knowledge (Loomba, 2002:109).

It is clear from the review of literature that the English interest at the age of Shakespeare is not only generated by the quest to know the other and discover the exotic, but it is also the pursuit of its own identity which pushed them to wondrous adventures in the sake of encountering the other. The latter is used for contrast to bring the English nation into existence. Among other things, these early modern re-writings of medieval chivalric narratives are the by-result of the encounter of the English travelers and "exotic" cultures. Their experience, in fact, is based on the form of the quest. Actually, the quest narratives of romance are an effort to encompass the world, to take imaginative control over it, to figure the relationships that occur between home and the foreign place.

Shakespeare portrays the Moors in his works as others not only due to their origins, but also due to their skin colour. Othello is never been accepted in the Venetian society though he holds a high position as the sole defender of Venice; this is achieved by invoking romance exogamy of the converted Othello. Shakespeare fractures that narrative and deforms it into tragedy in *The Tempest* where it is said that Caliban is a fish, a son of devil and subhuman. Whereas in *The Merchant of Venice*, romance exogamy is resisted to imagine a new global presence of the English nation. That is why "Morocco" is presented as trapped in an ethnic cliché of the black, ugly, prevented to win Portia's hand. In *Othello* as well as *Anthony and Cleopatra*, romance ended up in a tragic way with the death of the two lovers who represent two distinct cultures. Thus, this paper will investigate the importance of Shakespeare romance narratives to delineate and reflect the Elizabethan society. It will also try to show how these plays manipulated our senses of what constitutes reality and shape our views of the "Other". To achieve my aim, I will read the plays through Edward Said' *Orientalism* (1978) and Benedict S. Robinson's *Islam and Early Modern English Literature, The Politics of Romance from Spenser to Milton* (2007). The former will be explored since the Moor characters within the plays are portrayed as the "Other" and throw light on

the sixteenth century's hegemonic representations of the Orientals. Whereas the latter will be used since romance in the plays is a productive site of dialogue over the question of modernity, demonstrating the question of the transmission of stories beyond national borders, to distinguish a Moor from the English man.

As I have already mentioned before, light will be shed on the needed theories, by giving some outlines and backgrounds. In studying Shakespeare and the Moors, we will rely on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Benedict S. Robinson's *Islam and Early Modern English Literature, The Politics of Romance from Spenser to Milton* (2007). The former questions the idea of "Othering", whereas the latter highlights the tendency of romance to change the ways in which global identities were being explored in Shakespeare's work.

Said's *Orientalism* (1978), surveys the history and nature of Western attitudes towards the Orient. *Orientalism* is an influential book where Said argued that the existence of the Orient serves the interests of the West; it is constructed by and observed in its relation to the West. The principle of *Orientalism* and *Orientalist Language* is that the other is constructed in opposition to the self. He shows that the image of the East was falsely and intentionally belittled to inflate the image of superiority of the West. Said also argues that the idea of "Us" versus "Them", has existed to a greater extent in the minds of Orientalists, than actually in history. According to Said, *Orientalism* has from the beginning been a hierarchical system of beliefs that, of course, places the "West" on top. As the *Orientalist* typification of the world has taken root, it has ultimately become a submerged, societal ideal evident even in the very terminology still used to describe the world. According to Said, to support European superiority, others had to be made inferior.

The second theory is *Islam and Early Modern English Literature* (2007). This book argues that the genre of romance shaped early modern identities in the scene of cross-cultural encounter. Romance was the greatest literary form through which medieval Christendom had imagined its global contacts and conflicts, and it was a form that continued to provide important resources for literary production and novelty in the early modern period. According to the book, in the sixteenth century, religious wars, commercial and colonial expansion radically altered the terms of Europe's encounter with the world. Thus, it is showed

how early modern writers engaged and adapted the literary form of romance in order to rethink the forms of identity at a moment of cultural and ideological crisis. Benedict S. Robinson pointed out that the term "romance", finally, ramifies over time into a bewildering variety of different kinds of fiction, from the Odyssey to Greek romances to medieval chivalry to pastoral romance to late Shakespeare to tragicomedy to modern genres including Harlequin romances and science fiction (Benedict, 2007:07).

The Merchant of Venice, Othello, The Tempest, show how Moors are portrayed as the "Other" and throw light on the sixteenth century's hegemonic representations of the Orientals. The Merchant of Venice demonstrated how the Prince of Morocco is considered as the "Other" and alienated from the mainstream society because he is a Moor. In fact, he asked Portia not to dislike him "for my complexion" which is like the "shadowed livery of the burnished sun" (MV, 2.1.1-2). Othello presents Othello trapped in a cultural stereotype of the black and seen by many Englishmen as ugly, cruel, lustful, and dangerous, a near cousin to the devil himself. Othello is said to have a "sooty bosom" and is likened to "an old black ram" (OT, 1.2.70 & 1.1.88). He is also said to have thick lips while Caliban in The Tempest is characterized as a deformed monster rather than a coloured person, yet to Shakespeare's Elizabethans the Moors, all those African people were distinctly coloured people. and in Antony and Cleopatra, it is said that Cleopatra has a "tawny front" (A&C, 1.1.6). This natural phenomenon brings these characters face to face with the exact discourse of Orientalism which mentions much about the burned complexions of easterners, particularly the orientals, due to the burning sun over their desert. The four plays emphasize characters' colour, which means that there is a link between these Renaissance characters and the "noble savage" tradition of the Eighteenth Century product of man (Burton R, 1879:40-41).

As far as romance is concerned, Shakespeare revises romance in The Merchant of Venice, Othello, and The Tempest, arguing that each play transformed the emotional and ideological resources of the genre. In Merchant and Othello, romance strains, in the effort to embrace England's new global identity; in The Tempest, Shakespeare abandons romance exogamy with the abandonment of Claribel to an African marriage no one in the play celebrates, focusing our attention instead on

Caliban's attempt to rape of Miranda, a story of the policing of race and sexuality that expresses a very different conception of the world.

2. MOORS AS OTHERS IN SHAKESPEARE DRAMA

During the reign of Elizabeth I, England started its overseas expansion. Encouraged by the Queen, the British expanded and encompassed territories in the world's five continents. Their colonial experience enabled them to interact with the New World. They also had a great interest in the world of Islam in general and the Mediterranean countries in particular. To convince the world at that time and to assert itself, the English nation needed to justify colonialism. Thus, the country saw an explosion of travel books describing bizarre appearances of the natives of the "Other" world. It must be remembered that the Moors and Muslims in general were their rivals, enemies and competitors at that time. Shakespeare was among the playwrights who created Moor characters in their drama where many contradictory aspects surround the Elizabethan image of the Moor.

According to Edward Said, all academic knowledge about Third World countries is "somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by the gross political fact" (Said, 1987:11). The figure of Caliban in The Tempest then becomes the substitution of the inhabitants of the Moor world from a European perspective. Thus, through the figure of Caliban, the western view of the whole inhabitants of the "exotic" world was shaped. Edward Said's Orientalism has aided in heightening this focus on the political aspect of Caliban, because Orientalism provides a way to expose how a figure like Caliban may have been constructed and used to justify colonialism. This study examines the participation of Shakespeare's Caliban in the discourse of Colonialism.

In fact, Caliban is aware of his status, through succession at least, before being endowed with language: "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother" (1.2.359). Prospero's harsh treatment has to be considered; he treats Caliban with hatred and continually curses him. Caliban is not his servant but rather his slave who is forced to obey him. Thus, it also seems possible that Prospero's statement concerning Caliban's unknown father is just a reference to his lack of noble qualities. Miranda declares that he is "villain"

while Prospero often calls him "devil" or "slave"; Caliban is not only uneducated, but also uncivilized. Being alone in the deserted land, he could not experience social life. Since he is not used to the presence of other people, he has no knowledge of the right behaviour in society. Caliban desires domination; he proudly declares himself to be the king of the uninhabited island before the arrival of Prospero and Miranda. His attempt to rape Miranda is a sign of animal behavior since in the animal world it is natural that they try to transmit their genes. However, this behaviour is not accepted in human relationships according to Prospero who thinks that his education for Caliban is just a waste of time and energy (Benko, 4:2008).

Orientalism, as Edward Said defines it, is not merely an idea without corresponding reality. The Orient really exists geographically, culturally and historically. It is not merely an elaboration of a geographical distinction either, but an elaboration of a series of interests which is created and maintained by scholarly discovery and philological reconstruction. Orientalism is also "a will to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate even to incorporate the Other" (Said, 1978: 5), and the way Said approaches Orientalism is by seeing it as a sign of Western power over the Orient. Said argues that those texts, despite their pretense of being scientific, are biased due to the internal constraints of the ideology of imperialism.

The Orientalists do not innocently describe the Orient but also create and maintain the Orient. Anti-colonial discourse in *The Tempest* is shown by pointing out that Prospero's excessive anger toward Caliban's rebellion indicates Prospero's anxiety concerning the grounding of his legitimacy in ruling the island. If Prospero believed in his legitimate position, he would not need to be excessively angry because Caliban is, in fact, easily subdued. In other words, Caliban's rebellion is a satire of Prospero's own usurpation of the island (Sarwoto, 2009:17).

Critics then found in the figure of Caliban an embodiment of an oppressed native subjugated by a European Prospero. The allurements that Caliban offered to Prospero was a return to natural state of man, freed from the confines of civilization and its restrictions. In Caliban, then, it can be said that Prospero encounters his inner side that he wished to control through enslaving Caliban. This would explain why he would keep a monster who had attempted to rape his daughter in

such close proximity all times. The Europeans were aware of their need for the colonized people despite their "savageness", for they provided them with material things. Actually, Prospero told Miranda that they cannot miss Caliban because he was serving them as the colonies were serving Britain.

As far as Othello is concerned, it is both a fantasy of interracial love and social tolerance, and a nightmare of racial hatred and male violence. Othello is a victim of social beliefs simply because he is a Moor. Critics found striking similarities between Leo Africanus and Othello. Both Leo and Othello were Moors who were taken captive by Europeans, both converted to Christianity and seemed to have liked to settle in Europe and both were very influential figures who liked to work with fellow Europeans in the war against Ottoman terror. Louis Whitney detected some other parallel lines between Leo and Othello, i.e., both were Moors who escaped many hazardous dangers in the desert and mountains of Africa and both were "noble" Moors (Whitney, 1992: 476-482). Othello all throughout the play speaks as a Venetian citizen who loves his country and sees himself as an integral part in the buildup of this city. Though raised as a Moor, Othello chooses to side with his new fellow Venetians than with ex-native Moors. Being a Moor, through Iago's calculated tricks, and chance Othello was made to believe that Desdemona was unfaithful to him. Othello was the most humane, noble, and vivid Moor in Renaissance drama. The duke called him "Valliant Othello" while Iago categorizes Othello, his military commander, as "an old black ram" (OT, 1.2.70 & 1.1.88). The play is written in the torrid hatred of the stranger in Venice, in the confrontation of ethnicity and, beyond all, the atmosphere of extreme jealousy. Othello is trapped in an ethnic cliché of the black and seen by many Englishmen as an "Other", ugly, cruel, a near cousin to the devil, though he enjoyed a high rank as a military leader of Venice. According to the Venetians, Othello, the "black horse", committed a sin by marrying Desdemona, the white ewe (OT, 1.2.70 & 1.1.90).

The Prince of Morocco, in *The Merchant of Venice*, is another character who was not specifically referred to as a Moor by Shakespeare. He was given a country of origin in his very title, setting him apart as "Other" by his non-European and non-Venetian background. In fact, he was most likely one of those "tawny" orientalized Moors that was romanticized into

the exotic. His Otherness is due not only to his country, because every suitor Portia had except Bassanio is a foreigner, but it is due to his skin colour. He asked Portia not to judge him by his complexion and goes on to describe it as the "livery" of the sun. He has his own power, and is of noble birth aside from his colouring; he is shown as being noble on the inside, whereas Caliban, in *The Tempest*, is a monstrous schemer seeking to gain power, or at least a better master than Prospero. Portia, although she pokes jokes at all her foreign suitors says to Morocco that "yourself, renowned Prince, then stood as fair / As any comer I have looked on yet / For my affection" (*Merchant* 60). However, the Prince remains an outsider by the fact of his boasts of military conquests, scimitars, and nationality. The test of the caskets further provides to a sense of Otherness even if Morocco is not a true outsider (Benedict, 2007:49).

Thus, Shakespeare contributes to the discourse of Orientalism; he produces the Moors who are situated in a potentially threatening position. The characters within the plays were characterized as others not only due to their skin colour or origin, but as a way for questioning the intercultural difference and the construction of the British identity. Shakespeare's plays evoke the idea of what truly civilized European cultures would look like, without Moors, without disobedient women, without magic, and without romance. The latter is the sign of dangerous effeminizing and radicalizing of English tastes. *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *The Tempest*, show how Orientals are portrayed as the "Other" and throw light on the sixteenth century's hegemonic representations of the Moors. *The Merchant of Venice* demonstrates how the Prince of Morocco is considered as the "Other" and alienated from the mainstream society because he is a Moor. *Othello* presents Othello trapped in a cultural stereotype of the black and seen by many Englishmen as ugly, cruel, lustful, and dangerous, a near cousin to the devil himself. *The Tempest* in its turn represents Caliban as the "Other" because of his ignorable birth. Cleopatra is said to join lust with witchcraft and beauty to "tie up the libertine in a field of feasts" (A&C, 2.1.21-23), while Antony "is become the bellows and the fan/To cool a gipsy's lust" (A&C, 1.1.8-9). In fact, Cleopatra is repeatedly called a strumpet or a whore. A coloured person is also often connected with sorcery. As it is the case with Cleopatra's witchcraft. When Antony suspects her, he also says, "The witch shall die ..." (A&C, 4.12.47). As we know, Brabantio

accuses Othello of practicing on Desdemona "with foul charms" (OT, 1.2.73).

3. ROMANCE EXOGAMY IN SHAKESPEARE'S MOORS

Northrop Frye maintains that "romance is the first literary form because it is the form that mediates between theogony and human experience; it translates mythical narratives into what we can first truly call literature, and thereby seeks to accommodate the divine to the human" (Frye cited in Benedict, 2007:08). Romance has been called extravagant; this perhaps has to do not only with its embrace of an often errant fictionality but also with its investment in the experience of the foreign and its fascination with strangers. Romance within Shakespeare's works has led to a number of readings emphasizing the imaginative centrality of the New World. Without denying that romance helped shape the encounter with the New World, or that romance was in turn shaped by that encounter, these arguments have meant that chivalric romance's earliest cross-cultural engagement has tended to be downplayed or forgotten (Benedict, 2007:08).

Romance represents a significant site for exploring the global project of an emergent Europe first of all because it is itself such a transnational form. Its content also poses the question of global identities: it ranges widely through the world; it represents the encounter with often radical forms of difference; and it embodies a complex mixture of affective relations with foreignness: wonder, desire, fear, hatred. England's desire for a transnational English modernity, as a replacement for an equally transnational medieval Christendom is reflected in Shakespeare's works. In *The Tempest*, the story of Claribel's marriage to the king of Tunis, the event that brings Alonso and company across the Mediterranean, recalls the romance of exogamy, a late medieval literary form that, through a sexual fiction, figures the assimilation of the Saracen world and thus the global aspirations of Christendom. But in Shakespeare, that narrative is suppressed; it has lost its capacity to evoke a compelling vision of the world. In fact, the play's concluding return to the safe Italy with Miranda rescued from Caliban shows the European separateness and desire to have its own identity and preserve the purity of its blood. *The Tempest* is a story of sexual violence of the colonized subject who employs

the romance of exogamy in a distorted and degraded form. The racial discourse is signaled through a parodic inversion of romance exogamy. In this way, "The Tempest articulates a shift between a romance economy of difference founded in the erotic fiction to one in which pure identities are maintained through the policing of white female sexuality" (Heather cited in Benedict, 2007). The play is neither exclusively about the colonial world nor about European high politics but is engaged in constructing the terms of this very distinction. Between them, the marriage of Claribel and Miranda expresses the changing forms of a transnational identity in the early seventeenth century.

The marriage of Claribel to a Moor marks the distance the play travels, from a wedding in Africa to the promise of another wedding in Italy; Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand. Thus, exogamy appears as a loss, in the case of Claribel, or as an attempted rape, in the case of Miranda. In fact, the final return to Italy hints to Europe separation from the rest of the world. Shakespeare shifts from "chivalric romance in which marriage enables dynastic project of reconciliation to a racialized romance that salvages a divided Christendom in the fantasy of new Europe" (Benedict, 2007:64).

As far as Othello is concerned, Shakespeare traces Othello's tragedy as a romance of miscegenated desire, momentarily symbolized in the very different fates of these two pieces of foreign fabric. He dramatizes the failure of this romance and the descent of his Moorish general into murder and suicide. To allure Desdemona, Othello describes strange landscapes and monstrous races. In accusing him of witchcraft, Othello declares that Desdemona has not been charmed by potions or magic charms but she has been charmed by Othello's strange stories, whose capacity to elicit wonder itself represents a kind of enchantment and metaphorical literary magic. If marriage of a Moor and a Christian is a story out of romance, the union is achieved through Othello's romance narration. In fact, Othello secured his position as a "Moor of Venice" and not as Iago calls him an "erring barbarian" (OT.1.3.356). After he has begun to fall under Iago's spell, Othello continues to frame his identity in terms of romance. When he asks Desdemona for the handkerchief, Othello insists on its magical origins; it was a gift of an Egyptian who could almost read the thoughts of people (OT.3.4.57.58).

In Shakespeare, the relations between tragedy and romance are reversed. The romance of the

handkerchief generates the tragic violence which drives Othello to suspect Desdemona. Beginning with the marriage that should end a romance, the play dramatizes the disintegration of that marriage and the converted hero (Benedict, 74:2007). Othello's romance idiom is counterposed by a racist language that marks the failure of romance. If romance imagines forms of difference that can be assimilated, Iago imagines irreconcilable differences. Even in his suicide speech, Othello announces the impossibility of negotiating the opposing subject of romance. The failure of the latter is intimately linked to the felt ruin of a universal Christendom, a space of religious affiliations able to extend its boundaries to the edges of the earth. What Othello evokes is rather the distressing impasse at which romance has arrived. Exogamous romance turns out to be a fantasy whose magic is disappearing. According to Benedict S. Robinson, romance is defined by Shaftesbury, as an undisciplined, errant, and above all female mode of reading that exemplifies English susceptibility into the "barbarous", "monstrous" foreigners (Benedict, 2007:60).

In Anthony and Cleopatra, similar to Othello, romance ended up in a tragic way with the death of the two lovers who represent two distinct cultures. The play deals with power struggles, war, and the relationship of two impassioned lovers; Antony, a major Roman political figure and Cleopatra, queen of Egypt. Like Desdemona, Cleopatra is attracted by the ruler of the Roman Empire, Antony, who was representing the chivalric knight with all his qualities. Cleopatra fell in love with him despite the discrepancies that existed between the two cultures. In his turn, Antony neglected his duties and responsibilities towards his kingdom for the sake of being with her, in the name of love. Like Othello and Desdemona, their union failed and ended in a tragic way. Despite the sacrifices of Antony who was driven by passion, at the extremely important moment in which he goes after Cleopatra's ship and thereby loses the sea battle at Actium. Both Antony and Cleopatra at some points in the play take more of a political attitude in managing their personal affairs. Indeed, this exogamous Marriage affected greatly both the Roman and Egyptian empires, the fall down of their union represents the fall down of their nations. The failure was engendered of this inter-racial marriage and the idealistic medieval chivalric romance was due to the failure of the imperial encounters with the oriental other.

The Merchant of Venice in its turn evokes the romance of exogamy, the narrative through which romance seeks to encompass the world. At the same time, the play resists romance exogamy, constructing a set of anxieties about the contradictions of identity that was faced by the British at that time. Through the figure of the Prince of Morocco, romance even begins to seem a "Moorish" mode of thought and language. This genre had narrated the assimilation of Moors into Christendom though they were seen as others, and their failure in choosing the right casket rejects the romance exogamy.

4.CONCLUSION

It is commonly known and stated that Shakespeare used his plays to vehicle personal as well as social values and ideas prevailing during the Elizabethan time. His portrayal of Moor characters as others due to their different complexion and skin colour reflects the British ideology at that time. The world, in fact, was divided between a stable metropolitan center, the source of all lasting values, and a wilderness, the space of the quest itself, which is also the space that tests metropolitan values. From Shakespeare's writings of the romance exogamy, we can trace a transformation of early modern identities that mark the early seventeenth century as a crucial turning point in the history of England's global imagination, uncovering evidence of ideological struggles that do not become visible if we restrict our reading to the plays' direct engagement with colonial discourse. Thus, Shakespeare reflects so many contradictory aspects which surrounded the Elizabethan image of the Moor. The varied historical references point to differences in ethnic origin, religion, temperament, and savagery which gave forth two opposing sides to the tale of the Moor. Always an "Other", Shakespeare uses the ideas of the Moor to create effective reflections of Elizabethan society's ethnocentric view of other cultures.

Exogamy and Miscegenation desires were a common theme in Shakespeare dramas, yet union between the oriental characters and their western counterparts is never been seen as equal, and most of the time never been achieved. So, western critics called this union between Othello and Desdemona unequal marriage as the bride is European and the groom is an Arab Moor. He was treated with contempt and despised by all

Venetians for a crime he committed; that is his union with a white Venetian girl. In The Merchant of Venice, Providence did not allow Morocco to choose the right casket and was denied the chance to win Portia's hands. His Otherness is due not only to his country, because every suitor Portia has except Bassanio is foreign, but his skin colour. As it is the case with Anthony and Cleopatra, where the two lovers died in a tragic way, as victims of racial disparities. So, the whole plays contain long stories of how racial consciousness is manipulated for a wicked purpose, and Shakespeare seems to suggest thereby that racism is often exploited for a special purpose and thus it often comes to a tragic end.

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