**OTHELLO Critics**

**Ania Loomba:** "The play should be used to examine and dismantle the racism and sexism of the leadership of the state."

Othello

**A.C Bradley:** "Othello's nature is all of one piece. His trust where he trusts is absolute. Hesitation is almost impossible to him. He is extremely self-reliant and decides and acts instantaneously. If stirred to indignation, he answers with one lighting stroke. Love, if he loves, must be to him the heaven where either he must live or bear no life. If such a passion as jealousy seizes him, it will swell into a well-nigh incontrollable flood."

"He inspires a passion of mingled love and pity."

**F.R. Leavis:** "He is the nobly massive man of action, the captain of men he sees himself as being. In short a habit of self-approving self-dramatization is an essential element in Othello's make-up."

"Othello has a propensity to jealousy and has a weak characters: the stuff which he is made begins at once to deteriorate and show itself unfit. His love is composed largely of ignorance of self as well as ignorance of Desdemona."

**Sean McEvoy:** Othello's tragedy is that he lives according to a set of stories through which he interprets the world - and ideology - but it is a world that has been superseded. He cannot see that this is so, and the contradictions within his ideology destroy him. He's living the life of a chivalric warrior in a world run by money and self-interest."

Iago

**William Hazlitt:** "Iago is an example of the typical stage Machiavelli who personifies rationality, self-interest, hypocrisy, cunning, expediency and efficient 'police'. He is an amoral artist who seeks to fashion the world on his own interest."

**Neville Coghill:** "Psychologically, Iago is a slighted man, powerfully possessed by hatred against a master who (as he thinks) has kept him down, and by envy for a man he despises who has been promoter over him.

**Helen Gardner:** "He is monstrous because his malice is motiveless; that is the secret of its power and its horror, why it can go unsuspected and why its revelation always shocks."

**Germaine Greer:** "We no longer feel, as Shakespeare's contemporaries did, the ubiquity of Satan, but Iago is still serviceable to us, as an objective correlative of the mindless inventiveness of racist aggression. Iago is still alive and kicking and filling migrants' letterboxes with excrement."

**Sean McEvoy:** "The audience becomes complicit to Iago's intention and, like it or not, is soon involved in his vengeful plotting. He actually asks them what he should do... Many actors who have played that part have been capable of getting members of the audience to share Iago's delight in his own powers of evil invention."

**S.T. Coleridge:** "Iago is a being next to the devil only not quite the devil - and this Shakespeare has executed without disgust, without scandal."

Desdemona

**Marilyn French:** "In spite of her masculine assertiveness in choosing her own husband, Desdemona accepts her culture's dictum that she must be obedient to males and is self-denying the extreme when she dies."

Emilia

**Paul N. Siegel:** "The faithful Emilia joins her mistress in death, as she did the repentant thief who acknowledged Christ as his Lord as he died by His side."

"Emilia has the conventional weakness of the servant-confidante, and Iago makes use of these weaknesses."

**Eileen Abrahams:** "Emilia is pray to the dominant ideology of wifely duty. Emilia recognises women's pre-ordained social roles, and to a certain extent she accepts her social role."

Othello's Language

**W.H. Clemen:** "It is characteristic of the way in which the imagery portrays Othello's inner alteration, that from Act 3 Scene 3 on, Othello's fantasy is filled with images of repulsive animals that up to that point were peculiar to Iago. Iago's endeavour to undermine and poison Othello's imagination by his own gloomy an slow conceptions had been successful."

**S.L. Bethell:** "The theme of hell originates with him and is passed to Othello later as Iago succeeds in dominating his mind. Statistics show this impression to be well founded. Diabolic images used by Iago and Othello:

Act 1: Iago - 8; Othello - 0

Act 2: Iago - 6; Othello - 1

Act 3: Iago - 3; Othello - 9

Act 4: Iago - 1; Othello - 10

Act 5: Iago - 0; Othello - 6

**Fintan I'Toole:** "So close are Othello and Iago that they start to melt into each other. Not only does Iago take Othello's association with blackness, but Othello starts to take on Iago's characteristic imager and style of speech. In the early part of the play, Iago and Othello speak differently: Iago uses much more prose than Othello's deliberate poetic speech. But in the last 2 acts, as the two minds begin to fuse together, as Iago's words give shape to Othello's thoughts, so Othello starts to sound more and more like Iago.

Like Iago, he starts to turn people into animals in his imagery, conjuring up a world of goats, monkeys, toads, crocodiles, blood-sucking flies and poisonous snakes. Like Iago, he starts to appeal to the Devil and fills his speech with diabolic images of Desdemona as 'fair devil', 'false as hell', 'double damned', their bedroom as hell itself. Othello's grand verse breaks down into jagged, disordered prose. Iago's prose becomes triumphant verse.

Othello's last speech

**T.S. Elliot:** "I have always felt that I have never read a more terrible exposure of human weakness - of universal human weakness - than the last great speech of Othello. What Othello seems to be doing in making this speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavouring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself."