
The soldiers with horns

Military prowess is a quality attributed to many of Shakespeare's male characters. Great military men such as Hotspur, Lear, Hal and Julius Caesar share a proclivity for the military arts with Othello and Marc Antony. As a superior dramatist, Shakespeare employs specific literary techniques in presenting this type of character to an audience. They are consistently portrayed as outsiders or outcasts, even amongst friends and family, and essentially become threats to themselves and those around them. Hal, in *Henry IV* Part 1, is ultimately an outsider throughout the text. In the tavern with Falstaff, Hal is a prince waiting for the right moment to rise to greatness, and planning to leave behind Falstaff, either to death or banishment. Hal does not belong in the presence of his father because of his chosen path of exile from his duty as prince; Bolingbroke wishes Hotspur were his son instead:

... Lord Northumberland

Should be the father to so blest a son:

A son who is the theme of honor's tongue,

Amongst a grove the very straightest plant;

Who is sweet fortune's minion and her pride;

Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,

See riot and dishonor stain the brow

Of my young Harry (I.1.78-85 Signet Edition).

Here, Shakespeare successfully alienates Hal from his own father and from his country.

Julius Caesar, although partly as a result of his own actions, is distanced from his wife Calpurnia, as well as from his fellow senators, because of his rise to greatness and personal belief that he is invincible, both in body and spirit. This inevitably leads to his tendency to ignore the many omens, warnings and bad portents that plague him, such as the following gesture of warning from Artemidorus:

Caesar: Who is it in the press that calls on me?

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I hear a tongue, shriller than all the music,

Cry "Caesar"! Speak, Caesar is turn'd to hear.

Soothsayer: Beware the Ides of March.

Caesar: What man is that?

Brutus: A soothsayer bids you beware the Ides of March.

Caesar: Set him before me; let me see his face.

Cassius: Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar.

Caesar: What say'st thou to me now? Speak once again.

Soothsayer: Beware the Ides of March.

Caesar: He is a dreamer; let us leave him. Pass.

Because of the character's ignorance, Shakespeare is able to successfully portray Caesar as a spectator to the events of the play instead of as an active participant. Caesar's great military success over Pompey becomes a thing of the past that Caesar is not able to separate from his present obligations. The character of Caesar believes that honor in battle will reign supreme over all other threats and distractions. Hotspur, perhaps the most adept in performing the tasks of a military man, is a stranger to his wife during the play. He ultimately sets himself apart from his cohorts with grand aspirations of glory in battle while consistently ignoring the advice of others. Examples such as these prove that there is much to be said about the significance of the psychosocial relationships, choices, and failures of such military men based on their subconscious feeling of aloofness, and the way in which Shakespeare presents these faults to the audience.

However clear the actions of Othello and Antony seem to be (both are outcasts or outsiders in one sense or another), there is an important aspect of the two characters that is not so forthcoming; how Shakespeare uses technique, whether it be prosody, diction, syntax, spatial geography, relationship problems, or social ineptitude, to show the inconsistencies, sensitivities, and inadequacies present in the actions, reactions, and choices of Antony and Othello. Shakespeare's ultimate message to the audience in creating these two characters and having them falter (something they both have not previously endured) is that military greatness does not transfer to a successful life away from the battlefield; furthermore, one's political self cannot

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govern one's private self. Additionally, Shakespeare, in countless ways using numerous techniques, warns his audience of the dangers of relying upon military fame to gain success in separate areas of life. This type of immortal greatness automatically sets them apart from the common man, causing a feeling of loneliness (Antony) or isolation (Othello).

Shakespeare, by using the title "Othello, the Moor of Venice" gives immediate foundation to the idea of Othello as an outsider in Venice and Cyprus. Similar to Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, who is looked down upon by the Venetians and treated differently from the native people of that region, Othello comes to both Venice and Cyprus as a stranger and finds that he is treated as an outsider. Not only is Othello a stranger to both Cyprus and Venice, but he self-admittedly lacks the social skills that come with being a full-time soldier and outsider:

Haply for I am black

And have not those soft parts of conversation

That chamberers have, or for I am declined

Into the vale of years--yet that's not much -

She's gone (III.3.262-66 Signet)

This type of geographical displacement amplifies and magnifies Othello's discomfort and isolation. Shakespeare succeeds in illuminating the psychological defects of a military leader like Othello by juxtaposing his super-successful soldierly accomplishments with his own feelings of social inadequacy, seen in his willingness to believe Iago and condemn Desdemona. However, the question remains: how does this inadequacy come about in addition to the feelings of inaccessibility? The previous passage calls into question even something as simple as Othello's inability to speak in complex ways. Othello doubts himself right from the moment he elopes with his wife. Shakespeare immediately turns Othello's simple, successful military world upside down, and at the same time turns the audience's view of him upside down as well. Countless instances of techniques such as this are present throughout the text; however, one must take a closer look at Othello's surroundings in order to recognize the skill with which Shakespeare perpetuates these feelings of incompetence and inadequacy.

Othello's personal feelings of inadequacy are first brought about by his race and acceptance of his blackness by the surrounding characters of Venice. Othello's race proceeds (by the skill of a blossoming Shakespeare) to uncover the psychology of his character by further isolating and alienating him from the true Venetians. As Millicent Bell puts it:

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Othello's whole life seems to be shaped by a society - like Shakespeare's England - in which self-transformation as well as the transformations effected by the forces of social change, or even by mere accident, operate to alter what one is, shift one's very selfhood from one template to another. Before he became the hero who won the regard of the Venetian state and the love of Desdemona, he had been someone we can only dimly imagine.

Throughout the text, the diction and syntax Shakespeare employs become very important to the audience, as they gather insight on other characters' perspectives concerning Othello. "When Shakespeare wrote Othello, about 1604, his knowledge of human beings and his ability to dramatize it in language were at their height." In saying this, Alvin Kernan reminds us of the hideousness of the language of *Henry VI*, in which character depth is shallow and creativity low. Shakespeare's need for creativity strengthens the importance of technique in creating such an unstable character, for it is the audience who experiences the character through space and time.

Othello is removed from a situation of certain success and thrust into a situation where failure is inevitable. Othello, however, *chooses* this endeavor, as does Antony when he chooses Egypt over Rome. A combination of an inferiority complex and bad circumstances that test the limits of their honor allows Othello and Antony to become isolated in more ways than one. Isolation remains very important as a technique for setting Othello and Antony up to fail. In the beginning of *Othello*, after Desdemona and Othello have married, they fail to consummate their marriage due to constant interruptions. As a consequence, Othello feels isolated from the one person who he needs to count on for support. Once again, the comforts of success in battle parallel Othello's psychological discomfort with his wife. Antony's all-important sense of honor is tested thoroughly by Cleopatra, as she betrays him on more than one occasion.

The movement from Venice to Cyprus takes the isolation of Othello to an extreme, and plays a major role in the psychological reasoning behind his choices and actions. Kernan acknowledges the importance of changing geography on the actions and choices of Othello: "The movement of the play is from Venice to Cyprus, from The City to the outpost, from organized society to a condition much closer to raw nature, and from collective life to the life of the solitary individual." In a world where war is the only successful feature of Othello's life, appearance becomes just as important as honor through service. Othello claims that he requires "ocular proof" in order to condemn the sins of Desdemona (III.3.365), meaning that he no longer cares about feelings or instincts, but rests his fate solely in logic's hands. In a sense, Othello is an incomplete human being; a pawn who has been abused by his superiors and taken advantage of by his fellow Venetians. He is unable to trust his own feelings of doubt when confronted by Iago, and instead chooses to put his faith in the lawyerly, circumstantial, logistical evidence that Iago presents to

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him, such as the following incrimination of Cassio:

In sleep I heard him say, 'Sweet Desdemona,

Let us be wary, let us hide our loves!

And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,

Cry 'O sweet creature!' Then kiss me hard,

As if he plucked up kisses by the roots

That grew upon my lips; laid his leg o'er my thigh,

And sigh, and kiss, and then cry, 'Cursed fate

That gave thee to the Moor!' (3.3.416-423)

Here, Shakespeare brilliantly uses diction and syntax to create a believable scenario in which Othello is successfully duped by Iago. Iago tells Othello of an instance when he saw with his own two eyes and heard with his own two ears (forms of proof that Othello values) the dishonesty of Cassio. Othello's consequent obsession with "ocular proof" consumes him, thus allowing the embarrassment of becoming a cuckold to completely devour his sense of honor.

So far, it has been determined that Shakespeare, when composing the character of Othello, geographically isolated him on two distinct levels. First, he is isolated by his stays in Venice, where even his wish to marry Desdemona is fought against by her father Brabantio ("O thou foul thief, Where hast thou stowed/ My daughter?"), and in Cyprus, where authority is non-existent (I.3.61-62). Othello is also isolated by his heritage and his skin color, both of which remain important reservoirs of self-doubt throughout the text. This isolation, proximity to the rawness of nature, and absence of a strong government essentially create a plethora of possibility for Shakespeare to allow Othello's character to disintegrate right before our eyes.

After analyzing Shakespeare's portrayal of Othello, one must then ask how Shakespeare successfully links the psychology and isolation of Othello to Marc Antony without creating a plot that mirrors that of *Othello*? Shakespeare does introduce Marc Antony using the same technique of geographical alienation as he does with Othello; however, Shakespeare does not delve into the realm of the racial in Antony and Cleopatra, but instead attempts to create a conflict between the East and the West. Antony is immediately cast as an outsider, both to his own country of Rome and as a Roman in Egypt:

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Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes
That o'er the files and musters of war
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now
Turn
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front [...]
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gypsy's lust (I.1.1-9).

Interestingly, Shakespeare does not feel it necessary to use a character such as Iago to manipulate Antony into believing in his own inadequacy; he is instead juxtaposed with the character Enobarbus, his faithful supporter and the voice of true honesty without the presence of malice. As a consequence, Antony seems to be ruining his good name on his own accord, a fact that deepens the meaning behind his choice to remain in Egypt. Othello, in contrast, did not willfully choose his fate, but was rather duped by a knave into being a fool. In this manner, Shakespeare succeeds in separating Othello from Marc Antony, but simultaneously binding them together in a web of alienation and isolation where each man's only true virtue, honor in battle, is consistently tested and broken. Shakespeare employs completely original, yet subtle techniques in order to present Marc Antony as an outsider right from the onset of play, something that Othello did not realize until his demise. Antony is not set apart by his skin color as Othello is, but instead shares with him a private fear of being cuckolded and socially embarrassed by his female counterpart. Antony, like Othello, admits that "if I lose mine honor, I lose myself" (III.5.22). Neither man is ever proven to be cuckolded, yet their actions support the veracity of the rumors.

Antony, like Othello, believes he can rely on his military reputation to balance his poor choice of putting Cleopatra before Rome. The major conflict of this play is an almost overwhelming one, and Antony's choices are positioned as much more dramatic because of the global consequences that come with his actions. This is another difference between Antony and Othello, whose problems appear trivial in comparison because they are within a certain realm - although Othello's heritage makes the psychology of his choices global. In other words

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Shakespeare, in creating Marc Antony, sought to amplify the choices and actions of the great soldier.

Even more important, perhaps, than setting or tone are the female counterparts of Othello and Antony; it is they who are the root source of psychological changes and discomfort in the plays. Both men are "feminized" by women to such an extent that their militarized way of thinking is severely challenged. Shakespeare, throughout his literary works, consistently used this technique to highlight psychological deficiencies. Throughout both *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the male protagonists are extremely self-conscious about being betrayed by their significant other, even more so, perhaps, than they are fearful about obeying their political or military duties.

Antony, in a specific passage, discusses his intuition that Cleopatra is a whore who aims to publicly humiliate him, and then refers to himself as a member of the "horned herd" (3.13.128), which in Elizabethan times was a symbol for a cuckold (Sprengnether 198). Othello also refers to himself as having this horn, although he does so in a less direct way; "I have a pain upon my forehead, here." (II.3.283). This becomes perhaps the most important technique with which Shakespeare portrays both men as outsiders, because its effectiveness essentially becomes the foundation for the major conflict of each text. Also, the audience must again note the similarity in the usage of references to cuckolding to illustrate the isolation in both characters' minds.

Neither the pressures of defending a country in war nor seeing the death of a brother consistently compare to the pressures of public perception and the preservation of the honor won in performing these tasks. This fact allows the audience to see deeply within Othello and Marc Antony so that the core of each character's weakness can be turned outward and examined. So far, we have seen how Shakespeare complicates each character's choices and actions by combining them with isolating geography, alienating professions, insecure personalities, and situations that do not lend themselves to success nearly as much as they do to failure.

The loss of reputation is another significant component of Othello and Antony's erratic psychology that Shakespeare exploits in order to show the defects of such supposedly great men. Antony's Roman duties call for him to act in a masculine, orderly, and structured manner - an ideology that is completely disemboweled by his female counterpart, Cleopatra. His affection for his mistress becomes Antony's greatest weakness:

O, whither hast thou led me, Egypt? See

How I convey my shame out of thine eyes,

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By looking back what I have left behind

Stroyed in dishonor (III.11.53-56).

This weakness is also seen within the walls of Cyprus, where the Roman-like Othello, who could normally be counted on to sort out foggy situations, cannot distinguish truth from lies and immediately welcomes evidence over the protestations of his wife. In the same respect, Antony contrasts with Othello in that he is defiant of other people's views of his choice to stay in Egypt with his mistress, yet is torn as to who he truly is - an Egyptian or a Roman. Both men are terrified of being made a fool, a label that neither man has had to contend with over the course of his military career. The geographical and mental isolation of each man brings forth a panicked desperation in which each man falls back on a successful psychological tool that was employed in the past.

How, exactly, does Shakespeare deepen the audience's understanding of each man's psychology, elucidating how its essential components are brought about by fear of failure? With Othello, Shakespeare allows us to hear his innermost thoughts, from his high-flown, self-approving speech to the Senate down to his babbling insanity in the final scene. Allowing outside access to the exact psychology of Othello's character - the course of his thoughts and choice of his words - makes the relationship between him and the audience personal on every level. A good example of this technique follows:

O curse of marriage,

That we can call these delicate creatures ours,

And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,

And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,

Than keep a corner in the thing I love

For others' uses. Yet, 'tis the plague of great ones;

Prerogated are they less than the base;

Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:

Even then this forked plague is fated to us

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When we do quicken (III.3.267-75).

Once again, Shakespeare is able to link Antony and Othello in their critical contemplation of the women they love and the honor at stake. Both men are torn throughout the play as to whether they should follow their hearts or their heads. Othello follows his head almost to a fault - a tendency that he learned during his military career and falls back on for comfort. Antony, in contrast, seems to follow his heart: he does not heed the whisperings of those around him because of his egocentric view of the world. He feels he is above any man or folly. This is yet another interesting and stimulating way that Shakespeare, in the prime of his creative abilities, connects Othello to Antony, showing their dissimilarities and mistakes in similar situations where their very selves come under fire.

Although initially their reputations are completely reliant upon the comfort of military success, Antony and Othello gradually lose this security because of their mutual inability to manage both their political lives and private urges. The boundaries between each man's public image and private responsibilities and urges are unstable, and break down on numerous occasions. Othello cannot separate his past from his present or future, and proceeds to engage his military sensibilities when all else fails him. Desdemona and Cassio represent Othello's new enemy, forcing Othello to fall back on what he is familiar with: ocular proof and logical thinking:

By the world,

I think that my wife be honest, and think she is not,

I think that thou art just, and think thou art not,

I'll have some proof. My name, that was as fresh

As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black

As mine own face. If there be cords, or knives,

Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,

I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied! (III.3.380-387)

This psychological effect is another way in which Shakespeare highlights the discomfort that Othello feels while living in Cyprus. Antony is also unable to separate and successfully balance his military/political life from his private/domestic life. His relationship with Cleopatra is both political and personal. In other words, Antony may very well genuinely love Cleopatra, but first

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and foremost his love for her is a political message that the Roman way of life pales in comparison to the Eastern method. Antony commits the same error as Othello, reverting back to a militaristic way of thinking in order to recapture his manhood. Antony is presented as a man torn between political-military concerns and the powerful attractions of Alexandrian life; at times, he seems indecisive. For example, at the battle of Actium, he surrenders his military advantage to follow the fleeing Cleopatra "like a dotting mallard."

Both Othello and Antony essentially give up their greatness for "whores." Shakespeare once again shows the psychological vulnerability of Othello and Marc Antony through their relationships and actions towards their female counterparts. Both men speak of honor quite often throughout each play. Shakespeare successfully calls into question the only value with which the audience can identify Antony and Othello. Antony, although portrayed by Shakespeare as dismissive towards Rome and his civic responsibilities, is still respected as a fierce and honorable soldier - a fact that later gets crushed by his decision to follow the fleeing Cleopatra at the battle of Actium. This public embarrassment is monumental, and dwarfs the embarrassing behavior of Othello, although in relative terms each man's military prowess is broken down by a female counterpart.

What does Shakespeare mean by giving women such as Desdemona and Cleopatra incredible power over strong soldiers like Antony and Othello? Perhaps Shakespeare can be seen as a modern-day women's rights activist. Even when women do not play a major role in a text, such as in *Julius Caesar*, they still have an enormous amount of control over the men. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare again gives a woman outstanding amounts of control over the psychological well-being of men. Cordelia, by simply refusing to answer Lear's foolish request to be wooed by his own daughter, brings down an entire empire and inspires two countries to go to war. Like the frail Julius Caesar, Othello, Antony, and even Lear are presented to the audience as mere human beings: despite their superb war skills, they still hold the potential to become victims.

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