

The Adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Othello* in Nicole Galland's *I, Iago*

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Abstract—This study aims to identify how Nicole Galland's novel *I, Iago* is considered an adaptation of William Shakespeare's play *Othello* in terms of race, class, and the representation of women. Additionally, the study attempts to compare and contrast the adaptation and the source play in terms of the themes of race, class, and the representation of women. To achieve the objectives of the study, the novel is analyzed through the theory of adaptation. The study concludes with an examination of how Galland's *I, Iago* adhered faithfully to the events portrayed in Shakespeare's play *Othello*, while also illuminating the ambiguities inherent in Shakespeare's titular work.

Index Terms—adaptation, race, representation of women, *Othello*, Shakespeare

I. INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* stands as a timeless masterpiece, delving into the complexities of human nature, jealousy, race, and manipulation. Set against the backdrop of the Venetian Republic, the play follows Othello, the noble Moor, whose marriage to Desdemona is sabotaged by the deceitful machinations of his ensign, Iago. As one of Shakespeare's great tragedies, *Othello* is renowned for its compelling characters, intricate plot, and profound exploration of themes that resonate across cultures and generations. Through its depiction of love, betrayal, and the destructive power of jealousy, *Othello* continues to captivate audiences and scholars alike, inviting interpretations and adaptations that reveal new insights into the complexities of the human psyche.

Adaptation is just as important for preserving the play's relevance and guaranteeing its ongoing influence. Putting *Othello*'s concepts and characters in new surroundings allows present-day viewers to better understand and relate to the story. By doing this, adaptation ensures that the characters are relevant to today's issues, the story is captivating, and the themes are timeless. Hutcheon (2006) states that adaptations are interpretive and creative acts that retain the aura of the adapted text and contain within them a palimpsestic doubleness. Hutcheon (2006) also states that adaptation offers several advantages, one of which is its contemporary relevance. Some audiences might find it hard to relate to the Venetian Republic, the original setting of *Othello*. Nonetheless, alterations have the ability to bring the tale into contemporary settings like high schools, military facilities, and corporate headquarters.

Hutcheon (2006) also explains that diverse perspectives are another crucial aspect of adaptation. By reimagining characters and settings, adaptations can provide alternative viewpoints. Innovation and creativity are fostered by adaptation. Directors, writers, and artists have the opportunity to experiment with storytelling techniques, styles, and mediums. Modern adaptations often delve into issues like racism, gender dynamics, and the consequences of manipulation in today's society. They can provide a fresh take on the narrative, presenting it in innovative and thought-provoking ways. An essential aspect of adaptation is reaching a wider audience. Although the classic productions of *Othello* still hold the attention of theatergoers, adaptations have a wider and more varied audience. They give people who might not have been familiar with the original work an introduction to the themes and characters of the play. This assures that *Othello* will continue to be relevant for a long time to come, thus expanding its legacy.

Moreover, adaptations have intrinsic educational value. They introduce Shakespeare's themes and characters to new audiences and pupils, making them valuable teaching resources. Adaptations of Shakespeare's works make them more approachable for those who might find the original text difficult, bridging the gap between classical literature and modern comprehension. One new aspect of adaptability is multimedia interaction, where multimedia components like movies, virtual reality, or interactive web content are used in modern adaptations. These components allow viewers a variety of interesting experiences that support changing artistic expression mediums and audience participation.

Indeed, many have rewritten Shakespeare's *Othello*. Chambers (2016) declares that interpreting how writers from formerly colonized nations have "written back" to classic works from the English literary canon has been a major focus of postcolonial critics. Peck (2002) states that writers with foreign backgrounds or those who live in other nations and are still impacted by the legacy of British colonial control have made perhaps the most impact with their rewritings in recent years. Singh (2019) explains that Shakespeare's plays explore, reveal, marginalize, and engage issues of race, encounters with people of color, and growing nationalism in England. This causes writers to reflect on the issues that

Shakespeare explores. According to Boccardo (2019), the play *Othello* by Shakespeare is hailed as one of the most influential and enduring pieces of literature ever written. A deep and enduring educational experience, studying *Othello* offers insights into global themes, multifaceted characters, cultural dynamics, and language proficiency. Furthermore, *Othello's* adaptability guarantees its continued relevance by introducing the timeless story to modern audiences through creative reimagining. That is why it is important to study *Othello* and the essential role adaptation plays in keeping this timeless work lively and interesting.

In *Othello*, audiences are welcomed into a universe of ageless ideas that endure for ages. The play's story revolves around a number of themes, including racism, love, envy, and manipulation. Audiences and English researchers alike have come to understand the lasting relevance of these topics in modern society as they examine them within the framework of the Elizabethan age. Indeed, jealousy is still a powerful human feeling, love is still a universal force, and the dynamics of control and manipulation are still as strong now as they were in Shakespeare's day. Racism, one of the main themes of *Othello*, is also still a subject of debate and controversy in society today. By examining *Othello*, researchers can investigate these themes and consider how universal they are to the human condition. Moreover, audiences are introduced to a group of nuanced people in *Othello* who have deep motivations, inner lives, and weaknesses. The terrible demise of Othello, the devious manipulation of Iago, and the innocence of Desdemona all hold a fascination for readers and viewers alike. Studying the complexity of these characteristics helps everyone better comprehend human nature since they provide significant insights into human psychology and behavior.

The current study attempts to explore the adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Othello* in Nicole Galland's *I, Iago* in relation to the themes of race, class, and female representations. The literary work is analyzed by applying the theory of adaptation. Many studies have been conducted on Shakespeare's play *Othello*; however, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies can be found that tackle Galland's novel *I, Iago*. Furthermore, there have hardly been any studies conducted on how Galland's literary work can be considered an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* in relation to the themes of race, class, and the representation of females. The contribution of the study is to fill in the gap.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study approaches Shakespeare's *Othello* through the theory of adaptation to explore the themes of race, class, and representation of females. The work of Galland is a new reading of Shakespeare's play. Sanders (2006) states that many writers and scholars refer to adaptation as "rewriting" or "intertextuality" (p. 3). She makes a distinction between appropriations and adaptations in her capacity as an adaptation theorist. She also goes on to say that, depending on the intertextuality's goal, they are both different. While they both involve interaction with the text, Sanders continues, appropriation "adopts a posture of critique, even assault" (p. 4). She then goes on to define every word. She states, for example, that adaptations of classic literary works identify "themselves as an interpretation or rereading of a canonical precursor" and that "the movement into a new generic mode or context" is occasionally involved (p. 2). Meanwhile, she describes appropriation as "a decision to reinterpret a source text that is shaped by a writer, director, or performer's political or ethical commitment" (p. 2). Moreover, according to her, these theories introduce "multiple and sometimes conflicting productions of meaning" (p. 2).

On the other hand, another adaptation theorist, Hutcheon (2006), offers a fresh method for assessing adaptations that takes into account the narrative techniques and the media in which they are presented. She claims that the notion of adaptation ought to be the foundation of any adaptation. According to her, "adaptation theory should take [the reasons behind adaptation] seriously, even if this means thinking about the role of intentionality in our critical thinking about art in general" (p. 95). She talks about adaptations as a product and as a "process of creation and reception," regarding them as "deliberate, announced, and extended re-visitations of prior works" (p. 115). Hutcheon (2006) also posits that when adaptation is used to create a product, the primary ideas from the original sources will still be present, even though the original text will change. She states that the first step in the process is to identify the "adaptor" and the rationale for the adaptation, keeping in mind that the new work—the adaptation—may be accepted and perceived as a secondary or inferior source to the adapted work source (p. 15). She also claims that when adaptation is considered a process, it essentially turns into an appropriation process (p. 95). One views adaptation as a "formal entity or product". This implies that the adaptation may be taken from a different work or works. This could involve a "shift" to a different genre, medium, or even frame, style, and context—perhaps even just narrating the story from a different point of view—without altering the plot. A change from historical to fictitious, biographical to fictional, or real to fictional could also fall under this category. "Interpretation and their recreation" are where adaptation also begins. It can be viewed as a "form of intertextuality" and the "process of reception" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8).

Hutcheon (2006) goes on to say that everyone uses adaptation. She also talks about the significance of the new text, which is an adaptation, as well as the old text, which is an adapted text. She also declares that although no adaptation can match the quality of the "original", the adapted text is nevertheless regarded as superior to any adaptation. It is not the case that an adaptation of a literary work makes it the "original" or "authoritative" version (p. 11). When a text is altered and referred to as the "source" or "original", it might be just as essential as the original. Adaptation creates a "dialogue relation among texts", a phenomenon known as "intertextuality", which "was only a formal issue" (pp. 11–12).

III. ANALYSIS

A. William Shakespeare's *Othello* in Terms of the Themes of Race, Class, and the Representation of Women

Shakespeare's works have stood the test of time and provided inspiration time and time again. *Othello*, as discussed in this current paper, is only one example of the richness of his works. Although Shakespeare's themes are universal, so are their counterparts. Regardless of how we read Shakespeare, we can always end up having a counterpart opinion to the sentiments presented in his works. In hindsight, it depends on how we read Shakespeare that we can provide a counterpart opinion of what is in front of us. *Othello* is one of the most universally acclaimed of his works due to the theme of jealousy. Yet, other themes have started to surface over time that have forced critics to see this work in a new light. Hence, we have three updated themes in this play of race, class, and the representation of women.

(a). *The Theme of Race*

The theme of race plays a central role in shaping the experiences and destinies of the characters, particularly Othello, the Moorish general of the Venetian army. Through Othello's character and the interactions between the other characters, Shakespeare explores the themes of racial prejudice and the impact of societal perceptions of race. Little (1993) states that Shakespeare's play has three main plot points: Othello's blackness, his marriage to Desdemona, a white woman, and his murder of her. Of course, these components are connected. Their marriage is important to the meaning of Othello's murder of Desdemona, and Othello's blackness plays a major role in the meaning of their union. It is believed that Othello's blackness is what first gave rise to the play's fears.

Hogan (1998) also states that even in non-derogatory situations, the Venetian's attitude toward Othello is racial in practically every sense. Many Venetians regard Othello as a friend and colleague and as a superb leader of the Venetian army. Still, they refer to him as "the Moor" significantly more than they do as Othello at a ratio of nearly two to one in favor of the general category over the name. Put another way, they talk about him and even address him regularly, not as a distinctive individual but rather as an example of his race. Some examples to support this are when Roderigo refers to Othello as "the thick lips" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 63), and again when Iago goes on to characterize Othello as a brute beast, shouting that he is "an old black ram" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 85). Iago also raises fear in Brabantio with the possibility that Brabantio's grandchildren will be of mixed race, saying, "Your daughter is covered with a Barbary horse; hence, you'll have nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins, and gennets for Germans" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 88).

Iago goes on to degrade Desdemona for loving and marrying Othello, for she is too fair, beautiful, and white to choose "the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 123). "What delight shall she have to look on the devil?" he asks Roderigo (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 224-225). Brabantio accuses Othello of using witchcraft, a stereotype of Othello's background, to seduce Desdemona, as he believes only magic, foul charms, and drugs could take Desdemona "from her guardage to the sooty bosom of such a thing as thou, to fear, not to delight" (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 72-73). Brabantio also questions how she could "fall in love with what she feared to look on" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 99). Here, Brabantio is commenting on the appearance of Othello, as it is supposed to promote feelings of fear rather than love. Desdemona herself acknowledges the fact that Othello is black, referring to him not as Othello but as "the Moor" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 187). Even when she expresses deep affection towards him, she still does not call him by his name; instead, she says, "I love the Moor" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 243).

Later on, when Iago convinces Othello of Desdemona's infidelity, Othello replies, "She's gone" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 266). He offers two potential explanations for her treachery. One is age; he is "declined into the vale of years" but then dismisses this saying, "yet that's not much" (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 264-265). The other reason, the reason he accepts, is simply "I am black" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 263). Racism confronts Othello everywhere he looks. Its many masks or faces – friendship, admiration, love, and even hatred, contempt, and abuse – make it more persistent, alluring, and unstoppable. He ultimately gives in to the racist perception of people around him. The ensuing hopelessness results in suicide and murder (Hogan, 1998).

Othello decides to suffocate Desdemona, suggesting that he has at least partially adopted Venetian society's racism, saying, "I'll not shed her blood nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow" (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 3-4). Emilia suggests that her whiteness has become sacred, just as his blackness has become demonic, saying, "The more angel she, and you, the blacker devil" (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 129-130). Thus, Berry (1990) associates Othello's blackness with "ugliness, treachery, lust, bestiality, and the demonic. This poisonous image of the black man later informs Othello's judgment of himself" (p. 319).

According to the study of Tayyaba and Shamim (2022), the use of negative lexical items to describe character is evident. For example, Brabantio repeatedly uses the words "thief, devils, Barbary horse" to describe and disrespect Othello. Othello is also called "Moor" and "old black ram", which shows the racist attitude of others (p. 391). In contrast, Desdemona is referred to as tender, fair, sweet, and delicate by other characters to emphasize how different she is from Othello (Tayyaba & Shamim, 2022, p. 392). Finally, Neil (1989) states that, in *Othello*, discussions over race are nearly always inextricably linked, whether directly or indirectly, to those of culture, because differences in hue are understood to represent differences in "barbarity", "animality", and "primitive emotion" (p. 393).

(b). *The Theme of Class*

Frazer (2016) states that a jealous subordinate officer brings down Othello, a dependable state officer, for reasons related to race, class, and proper authority while conducting state business. This summarizes what Iago did to Othello,

as people at that time in Venetian society believed that people with darker complexions were seen as being of lower class and status. According to Smith (2013), the strongly racist vocabulary of Iago from the play's opening scenes makes Cassio see himself as "drunken and disorderly" as a monstrous black demon, whom Othello represents as the typical "socially disruptive and animalistic foreign character" (p. 13). In the opening scene, Iago calls Othello "old black ram" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 85).

When Desdemona runs off and marries Othello behind her father's back, it is Iago who informs him that the daughter of the patriarch should not marry a general in the army. Brabantio refers to this marriage as "treason of the blood" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 169). Berry (1972) declares that Venetian society does not approve of racial intermarriage, and of course, as Desdemona comes from a patriarchal family, how can she marry a general in the army? This is proven when Brabantio also says, "Have to incur a general mock / run from her guardage to the sooty bosom / of such a thing as thou?" (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 69-71).

Other than Othello's social status in Venetian society, Iago's social status is looked upon and seen as part of the reason why he was not promoted to lieutenant. The relationship between Cassio and Iago has no trust, as there are hints that Iago comes from a lower social stratum than Cassio. Iago proves this in Act I, Scene I, where he expresses his discontent about Cassio's promotion over him, suggesting that Cassio's higher social status played a role in the decision (Berry, 1972). Iago says, "And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof / At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds / Christian and heathen" (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 4-5). Iago is fuming because Othello passed him over for the position of lieutenant and instead chose Cassio, a seemingly inexperienced soldier. Here, Iago boasts about his own military experience, as witnessed by Othello himself. He fought alongside Othello in various locations, such as "Rhodes", "Cyprus", and "other grounds", against both Christian and pagan ("heathen") enemies. These examples in Shakespeare's play paint a picture of how Venetian society at the time viewed social class as well as customs and what they considered normal or not. The social class of the characters determines the kind of relationship they have with each other as well as how they advance in promotions and who to marry.

(c). *Representation of Women*

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, the play shows the oppression women must endure daily. Although Desdemona and Emilia's characters are proven to be of high conduct, patriarchy controls their ends and dooms their favor and fortunes. According to the study by Hussain et al. (2023), since she is educated and the daughter of a senator from Venice, Desdemona is a highly sought-after woman. Nevertheless, she decides to wed Othello, a Moor serving as a Venetian army general. She bravely opposes her father and anyone else who disagrees with her decision (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 180-192). Here, Desdemona shows that she obeys her husband and follows society's patriarchal rules, even though she defies her father by marrying Othello. "She believes that her faithfulness to her partner is a testament to her position as a spouse and her contribution to their household's happiness" (Hussain et al., 2023, p. 3). She uses manipulation to show where her duty lies according to patriarchal society while defying them at the same time.

Her presence is seen by many Venetians as being essential to Othello's existence (Hussain et al., 2023). This is made clear when Othello's subordinate Cassio addresses her as "She that I spake of, our great captain's captain." (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 76). It is implied that she is one of Othello's main sources of inspiration, giving him the will and drive to ensure Cyprus's triumph. This emphasizes Desdemona's special and significant part in Othello's battle against the Turks (Hussain et al., 2023, p. 4). It is obvious that she is the source of his strength, given that Othello recognizes her as his "fair warrior" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 175).

Frazer (2016) explains that Emilia struggles with patriarchal authority as well. Like Desdemona, she is destroyed by patriarchal ideals that deny her free will and an independent voice (p. 517). Between giving in to Iago's demands over the handkerchief and meeting her demise at his hands, Emilia starts to realize that someone is discrediting Desdemona. Iago's misogynistic "jest" regarding Emilia's tongue causes Emilia to act reluctantly and become silent when she first lands in Cyprus with Desdemona (p. 517). At the moment, Desdemona finds the joke amusing, saying, "Alas, she has no speech" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 103). Later, Emilia regrets that she is in so much trouble that she is unable to comprehend because of her free speech on Cassio's behalf. Emilia responds to Othello's charge that Desdemona is a whore by calling him a devil during their confrontation after he has mortally wounded Desdemona. Previously, Emilia had addressed him as "my lord" (Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 130-134). This shows how Emilia's character changes from being silent to someone who will speak their mind.

In her study, Das (2012) argues that the tragedy of *Othello* is the result of following patriarchal norms and prejudices. The play is based on men's misconceptions about women and women's helplessness to defend themselves against how society views them. This is shown by Othello's dominance, violence, and authority, which are far manlier than Desdemona's highly feminine traits of submission, gentleness, and compliance. After being severely beaten and verbally abused by Othello out of jealousy, Desdemona informs Iago, "I am a child to chiding" (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 96). Because of a system that views women as the weaker, more dependent sex, Desdemona is powerless to stop Othello and is ill-prepared to handle such aggression. As a result, Desdemona retreats into infantile behavior as a way to avoid facing reality.

Das continues that Shakespeare acknowledges that women have historically faced social, economic, and political disadvantages throughout human history. Shakespeare has outlined gender concerns through strong female characters. He has presented a thorough analysis of life, giving equal weight to the perspectives of men and women. His female

characters depict the societal stigmas women experienced during this period. By endowing his female characters with qualities and strength, he has conveyed his own appreciation for strong, educated women. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that Shakespeare was a pioneer of the feminist movement. In actuality, he promotes the full liberation of women in society and aims to eradicate gender inequality through the portrayal of female characters in tragedies (Das, 2012).

B. Nicole Galland's I, Iago as an Adaptation in Terms of the Themes of Race, Class, and the Representation of Women

The novel *I, Iago* is the retelling of the play *Othello* by Shakespeare from the point of view of the villain, Iago. It depicts his life before the beginning of the play as well as his point of view during the play. The novel is made up of two parts: "Before", which is considered the prequel to the actions of Shakespeare's play, and "After", which takes place simultaneously with the play. The actions that take place in the "Before" part show how Venetian society is built, how Iago views this society, and how he is made an ensign in the military. He forms a great connection with the general Othello that is full of admiration and love until Othello decides to promote Cassio to lieutenant instead of him, which results in Iago feeling betrayed and wanting revenge. The actions that take place in the "After" part show the flow of thoughts in Iago's head and all his master plans for revenge and the reasons behind them. The themes of race, class, and the representation of women are present in both the novel and the play, as the course of action takes place simultaneously.

(a). Race

Galland (2012) stays true to the representation of racism in *Othello* in her adaptation *I, Iago* as she uses some of the same expressions used in Shakespeare's original play to describe Othello as well as adding her own. In the novel, starting with the "Before" section, Iago first meets Othello at a party. Before seeing him in person, the people around Iago started to describe the newly appointed general. They describe his black face as a mask, saying, "They say it's not a mask at all! They say that is his real face! Can you imagine? So ugly and so dark?" (p. 104).

The people in Venetian society stress the fact that he is of a different color, and some even tried to wipe the paint off his face to no avail. A Venetian society woman says to Iago and his wife, Emilia, that even if he is not quite human, he should not be treated as an animal (Galland, 2012). She says, "Well, it isn't human skin ... Human skin is not that color" (Galland, 2012, p. 105). These examples show how society is racially prejudiced against Othello and how they already formed an idea of him without even knowing him. Iago's first meeting with Othello is not spoken of in Shakespeare's play, yet Nicole Galland managed to create a first meeting that makes sense in the way people are reacting to the sight of a black man and the prejudice that is shown against him. Upon seeing Othello, Iago describes him by saying that even his lips and gums are dark, which makes his teeth even whiter. He also describes that his complexion and dress make him stand out, and the embroidered strawberry kerchief tied around his neck seems out of place (Galland, 2012).

The way Othello is being described shows how fascinated Venetian society is by someone who is different from them by race and background. More stereotypes are mentioned when Roderigo, Iago's childhood friend, sees Othello. He calls him a "barbarian" and adds, "Not likely he'd be buying spices from me; anyhow, he probably eats raw meat" (Galland, 2012, p. 119). These stereotypes are linked to people of darker complexions and are looked down on by the Venetian society set in this novel. The senators of Venice are fascinated by Othello's dark skin and invite him to all sorts of parties and dinners; this makes Othello feel like something to be shown off. Othello states, "I am not Othello to them. I am not even the general of their forces. I am, rather, something to show off to their neighbors and their servants, and themselves. I help them feel pleased with themselves. They are so cosmopolitan and perhaps even brave that they chat with somebody who hardly looks human to them. I am so sick of it, Iago. I am so damn tired of it all. I cannot wait until we quit this damned city again" (Galland, 2012, p. 144).

Othello is invited to Barbantio's home to dine, where he fancies Desdemona, Barbantio's daughter, but Iago knows of the patrician's way of thinking, and other than the fact that Othello is neither a patrician himself nor a Venetian, he also states that Othello will change the race of the family (Galland, 2012). This is not acceptable in Venetian society. Upon explaining the way of Venetian society to Othello, Othello argues with Iago: "Here, in this great republic, where my race has not prevented me from ascending to the heights of..." (Galland, 2012, p. 163). Iago explains that he may ascend in his military status, but never to the position where he could marry the daughter of a patrician in Venetian society.

In the "After" section, when Othello eloped with Desdemona, Roderigo, with the encouragement of Iago, told Desdemona's father, Barbantio, that they ran away to be married; Roderigo calls Othello "the Moor" (Galland, 2012, p. 223). The word "Moor" is used continuously in both the novel *I, Iago* and the play *Othello* as a way to describe Othello's dark skin in an insulting manner. Furthermore, Barbantio accuses Othello of using black magic to make Desdemona marry him, saying, "Have you used your heathen magic to enslave her with lust?" (Galland, 2012, p. 224). This stereotype is typically associated with third-world countries, and thus, Othello is accused of using magic, as it is unbelievable that a fair white woman from Venetian society would willingly fall in love and marry a black man. Barbantio also states that he will take the case to the members of the Council, and he will accuse Othello of kidnapping Desdemona because no member of the Council will side with a "foreign black heathen" (Galland, 2012, p. 255).

(b). The Theme of Class

The theme of class in Shakespeare's *Othello* serves to highlight the complexities of social hierarchy and the ways in which it can impact relationships and interactions between characters. It is subtly woven into the fabric of the play, particularly through the characters' interactions and social statuses. In Nicole Galland's *I, Iago*, she shows how social status plays an important part in how the characters act and how they perceive each other.

In the novel, starting with the "Before", Nicole Galland paints a picture of how Venetian society is at this time. The reader can see this in how Iago describes Roderigo's family's financial state. He explains how Roderigo's family could not afford a nursemaid for their child as his father was a failing spice merchant, while Iago's family could afford one as his father was a thriving silk trader (Galland, 2012, p. 5). Iago even helped out his friend, Roderigo, when they were children by giving him his share of money that they earned together so that Roderigo would be able to buy new clothes for himself (Galland, 2012, p. 14). The author also shows us how Iago's family had many servants and adored the frivolous social culture where they attended multiple balls wearing fancy masks (Galland, 2012).

When describing Emilia's house, Iago sees that they are not a wealthy family as he looks around the furniture of the house, stating, "I smiled politely, aware that Emilia was waiting to see if I would judge her for her family's modest means" (Galland, 2012, p. 95). This shows how the characters view each other in the social hierarchy of Venetian society. This plays an important role in how one chooses the person they will marry.

Othello's otherness as a Moor occupies a unique position in Venetian society. While he holds a high rank as a general, his race and outsider status make him a target for discrimination and prejudice. This highlights the rigid class boundaries of the time and the challenges faced by those who do not fit into the established social hierarchy. This is seen when Othello starts to fall in love with Desdemona and asks Iago to explain the "Venetian courting customs" (Galland, 2012, p. 162). Iago explains that since Desdemona is the daughter of a patrician, she can only marry someone of the same rank. He also explains that no one can ascend to become a patrician; one must be born into a family of patricians (Galland, 2012, p. 162). Othello is upset by this and starts to think about how his race prevents him from ascending through the ranks of Venetian society, which proves that he will be forever considered an outsider (Galland, 2012, p. 163). Here, Othello somehow accepts that he will not marry Desdemona and asks Iago to come with him when he is to dine at Brabantio's house to "help [me] remember my place" (Galland, 2012, p. 164).

Roderigo also fancies Desdemona, and when he tries to ask her father for permission to marry her, her father says, "Of course we won't accept this. The man is not even a patrician, for the love of angels. Why does he think I would let him near my daughter?" (Galland, 2012, p. 173). This also shows that even Roderigo, who became a wealthy spice trader, is rejected by Brabantio for not being a patrician.

Desdemona's decision to marry Othello, a man of lower social standing, is seen as her rebelling against the norms of her class. Her father, Brabantio, expresses shock and dismay at her choice, highlighting the importance of social status and reputation in their society. We can see this in the "After" part of the novel where Brabantio accuses Othello of using witchcraft to kidnap Desdemona in front of the court (Galland, 2012, p. 226). When Desdemona states that her duty lies with her husband, Brabantio expresses disapproval and says to Othello, "She deceived me. She may deceive you just as easily" (Galland, 2012, p. 235).

Iago's resentment towards Othello is fueled in part by his own ambition and desire for upward social mobility. He wants the lieutenantcy that was given to Cassio, which will give him better rank in the army. He sees Othello's marriage to Desdemona as an affront to his own ambitions and uses it as a pretext for his schemes. He plots to make it seem like Desdemona betrayed Othello with Cassio, which will "indulge [my] righteously vengeful imagination" (Galland, 2012, p. 243). By acting upon his plan, he will be given the lieutenantcy that he longed for, which will make him rise in social status. Iago manipulates the characters' perceptions of each other based on their class, using stereotypes and prejudices to turn them against each other. This manipulation highlights the ways in which class differences can be used to show discord and division (Galland, 2012, p. 246).

(c). *Representation of Women*

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, the representation of women is nuanced, mainly in the roles of Emilia and Desdemona. Even though these women have important parts in the play, the patriarchal culture in which they live also has an impact on the characters. Through a retelling of the events from the perspective of Iago, the antagonist of William Shakespeare's *Othello* and Galland's novel, *I, Iago* presents an original retelling of the drama. Galland's book has a complex and multidimensional portrayal of women, especially Emilia and Desdemona. Emilia is shown as a multifaceted person with her own goals, reasons, and challenges. She is shown as Iago's devoted wife, yet she dares to disagree with her husband's decisions and deeds. In Galland's novel, Emilia's character is given more nuance and agency, and her connection with Iago is examined in greater detail. Desdemona is similarly given more depth in *I, Iago*. She has a more detailed portrayal of her relationship with Othello, and her choices and actions are given more meaning. Desdemona's character is revealed to be independent and strong-willed, defying the stereotype of her as a helpless victim. The following evidence from the novel will explain this further.

In the "Before" section, Galland paints a picture of how women were treated at the time in Venetian society. When Iago goes to a brothel with his cadets, he talks suggestively of the women, explaining how they are dressed in revealing clothing. He also talks to them disrespectfully (Galland, 2012, pp. 39-41). Iago states, "The city of Venice boasts approximately one whore for every seven male citizens. Many of the prostitutes are mistresses who live better than proper wives (Galland, 2012, p. 39)." This suggests the normality of having wives as well as mistresses for one man.

Women at the time wore makeup, and Iago looked down on it as unnecessary and something that ruined their natural beauty. He describes his mother as “creating a new face for herself” and says all the women look identical. He also describes this by saying they were “looking ridiculous” (Galland, 2012, p. 49).

After Iago marries Emilia and they meet Othello, Iago is asked to leave Venice without Emilia. She does not approve of this and says something to Othello to convince him that she should come along. At first, Iago believes she offered herself to him and accuses Emilia of this, saying that this was expected (Galland, 2012). He asks her, “Did you say you’d make yourself available to him as well? Do you plan to whore yourself to the higher ranks? Don’t think I haven’t heard about what officers expect of lower-ranking wives” (Galland, 2012, p. 121). When she says that she merely said that her being with Iago improves his performance with the military, he says that this kind of talk is unacceptable from a woman, stating, “He thinks you’re loose. When a woman talks to a man like that, a man knows what it means” (Galland, 2012, p. 122). This suggests that men thought of women only as sexual objects during this time.

When Othello showed interest in Desdemona, Iago declared that her father would not “dispose” of her to someone who was not a patrician or Venetian and would change the race of the family (Galland, 2012, p. 156). The use of the word “dispose” shows that women did not have a choice in their marriage and that their male guardians had control of this choice. In this case, Desdemona’s father is the only person who chooses whom she will marry. Iago continuously calls Desdemona “that girl”, to which Emilia replies, “You’ve never once to my ear called her that [Desdemona]. You call her ‘that girl’, as if she were an object, not a person” (p. 157). Iago states that she “essentially is an object. She will be married off according to her father’s will” (p. 157), which further proves that women had no choice whatsoever. Brabantio, Desdemona’s father, does give her the choice to reject different suitors, which makes Iago describe him as an “indulgent father” (Galland, 2012, p. 164). This shows that Desdemona had the right to reject but will nonetheless marry someone her father approves of. She is given part of the choice.

In the “After” section of the novel, Desdemona later chooses to marry Othello against her father’s wishes and states in front of the court, “My duty lies with my husband” (Galland, 2012, p. 232). This shows Desdemona’s character as a strong-willed and independent woman. When Iago, Emilia, and Desdemona reach Cyprus, Iago talks to the ladies in a demeaning manner. He says, “Speaking as a man renowned for his honesty, I am pained to inform you that you – and all ladies, if her ladyship will excuse me – you are three kinds of dishonest. In public, you’re the very picture of innocence, but at home, you nag and complain, and then in bed, of course, as every man knows –” (Galland, 2012, p. 251). Emilia stops him from continuing, as this talk is disrespectful, especially when he is addressing Desdemona. This shows the patriarchal society that they lived in and how men view women.

Violence was apparent in the way men treated women. When Othello receives a letter about the state and it upsets him, he slaps Desdemona across the face (Galland, 2012, p. 331). This is the start of Othello’s violence toward his wife. This violence surprises Iago and Lodovico, who witnessed it. After Othello killed Desdemona and Emilia found out, Iago tried to keep her quiet so that she would not expose him. He asks her to “stop your tongue”, but she refuses, claiming, “I am honor bound to speak now” (Galland, 2012, p. 360). She accused Othello of murdering an innocent woman and denied everything Iago claimed about Desdemona. Iago, feeling betrayed by her, tried to get her to leave and go home, to which Emilia turned to the gentlemen in the room and asked, “Give me leave to speak” (Galland, 2012, p. 362). Here, Emilia’s character shows strength, as she will not be silenced and will speak the truth. Iago sees this as betrayal, as he expects his wife to obey him. Emilia continues to clarify that she is the one who found the handkerchief and accuses Iago of being a lying devil. She further states, “The truth will out, Iago! It will out! I will speak if the heavens and the devils together conspired to shut me up! I’ll speak, you evil creature!” (Galland, 2012, p. 363). Iago then starts to curse at her and call her a liar as he states, “She was betraying me” (Galland, 2012, pp. 364-365). He tries to justify killing her by stating that she is betraying him. He then stabs and murders her to keep her quiet (Galland, 2012, pp. 364-365). This shows how Iago felt threatened by Emilia’s words and the power that her words held.

IV. CONCLUSION

Galland’s novel *I, Iago* is a retelling of Shakespeare’s play *Othello* from the point of view of the character Iago. The novel is made up of two sections. In the first section, Iago talks about his childhood, explains how he got into the army, and talks about how he met and married his wife, Emilia. The first section ends with Othello choosing Cassio to be his lieutenant instead of Iago. The second section begins with Iago plotting revenge against Othello and Cassio in order to get the lieutenantcy that he deserves. The second section is where the events align with those in Shakespeare’s play *Othello*. The writer retells the events in the play from the point of view of Iago, giving readers a reason for his actions and thoughts that were ambiguous in the original play. Galland used some of the same expressions and words used in the original play and incorporated them into her novel. She also stayed true to the sequence of events in the original play. This study analyzed the novel in comparison with Shakespeare’s play based on the themes of race, class, and the representation of females. In sum, Galland’s *I, Iago* can be considered an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Othello* based on the evidence that supports the themes of race, class, and the representation of females. The evidence shows how the novel took the events of the play and retold them from the point of view of Shakespeare’s antagonist, Iago.

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