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ABSTRACT

James Persichetti

English

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INQUIRY INTO SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO*

Advisor: Dr. Mark Bruhn

Reader: Dr. Nicholas Myklebust

Every time we open our mouths to speak we are performing an aspect of our identity in language. How we perform our selves is influenced by the social expectations and pressures around us, as well as our relationship to our auditors in the linguistic market. My thesis examines these pressures through William Shakespeare's *Othello*, looking at how Othello's identity is negotiated in his dynamic language and how the Venetian society sees him as an *other* by analyzing the density of Latinate words in various characters' monologues. With key theorists Pierre Bourdieu, Edward Said, and Irving Goffman, as well as drawing on my own experiences as a foreigner in Japan, I address issues surrounding language performance especially when using a foreign language. Ultimately my thesis seeks to address the question: how ought we treat foreigners based on their language?

“SAY IT OTHELLO!”:
A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INQUIRY INTO WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE’S *OTHELLO*
AND THE EFFECTS OF EXPECTATION ON THE LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE
OF SELF

A thesis submitted to
Regis College
The Honors Program
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for Graduation with Honors

by

James Persichetti

May 2015

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INQUIRY INTO SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO*

written by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I owe a great deal of gratitude to William Shakespeare. Without his brilliant works I would not be the scholar I am today. Thank you for inventing the human, Billy.

I am forever indebted to the constant support, care, and excitement that my advisor Dr. Mark Bruhn and my reader Dr. Nicholas Myklebust brought to this project every day. They were strict when I needed them to be strict and unfailingly patient when I needed their patience. Every discussion was new and invigorating, full of epiphanies and deep engagements with the texts and our experiences. It was an absolute honor to work with these brilliant minds.

I have worked with Dr. Bruhn for four years as his student. He first introduced me to linguistics and I had the great pleasure of being his teacher's assistant, so to conclude my college career with this thesis was the capstone to a long and fruitful relationship which I hope will continue. Working with Dr. Bruhn is always a mixture of awe for his genius and joy in his hip spunk, ATKS.

I cannot express how incredible Dr. Myklebust has been for accepting to work with me on my senior thesis project during his first year at Regis University. His passion for linguistics and for *Othello* inspired me and his copious notes on my work pushed me beyond what I knew I was capable of. My only regret is that I only had one year to share with him at Regis.

While Dr. Palmer was on sabbatical during my senior year, I must extend my gratitude for all he has done for me at Regis and for my project. We have shared a love for Shakespeare these past years and he gave me the original drive to write my thesis on a Shakespearean play. Thank you, Dr. Palmer, for being the Gandalf to my Bilbo.

I would also like to thank our honors director Dr. Howe as well as our previous director Dr. Bowie, and our librarian Martin Garner. They have walked with me on this journey every step of the way, helped me discover what I wanted to write about, and always assured me that I would live through the process even when I turned in updates a week late.

My family and friends have of course encouraged me the whole way. My fellow students in the honors program have been a family at Regis and I am so impressed with each and every one of them for how much they have grown. I would like to especially thank my sister Emily for all our discussions and for helping me figure out my path into this project.

Chapter 1 – Language and *Othello*

1.1 Being a Foreigner and a Stranger in Japan

I came home from Japan having learned much about myself, about the world, but also with a strong conviction: that every person needs to feel at some point in their life what it is like to be both a stranger and a foreigner. The experience has the power to enrich a person's life beyond their education in a university, beyond their experiences available to them in their own country, beyond their imagination even. I believe that if everyone had been a foreigner at least once in their life we would have more empathy and respect.

When you are a stranger, you have the opportunity to partially rewrite who you are in your actions and in your words. This can be a daunting task for those who are settled in with their normal routines of presenting their self, comfortable with the way they speak to their friends and the way they act around their siblings, and faced with the prospect of having to revise this behavior around friends of a different caliber or associates in different groups. Will you revise yourself into a better person or one lacking what you used to have? Does your core identity really change that dramatically or are your performed identities merely different projections of the same self?

Being a foreigner puts one in this same identity struggle with added layers of anxiety. The first barrier is the language barrier, as one of the core mediums through

which you enact this inner self has either been altered or is entirely different. The language barrier exists between two countries of the same language but with different dialects—America to England for example where telling someone you like their pants can have unexpected implications—and exists especially between two countries with languages not even marginally similar—like America to Japan where not only are you bereft of your colloquial expressions but even the conventions of expressing opinion and hope are changed. Varying degrees of mastery over this foreign language provide varying capabilities to express your identity. You may be able to express your dislike for seafood, which can reveal something about your inner self depending on who your auditor is, but in matters of educational systems or political unrest where more socially significant characteristics of your inner self might shine, you may simply lack the very words required to show this part of who you are.

I have talked to many people who have had such experiences abroad and it is overwhelming how many of them say after they return that they will never look at foreigners in our own country the same way. After having been in a situation where they felt stupid for their lack of understanding, where they had difficulties with simple tasks like finding a bathroom, or where they felt like a Christmas lightbulb sticking out in a crowd, their way of judging others who live in like conditions dramatically changes.

In America we encounter foreigners on a regular basis. Immigrants from other countries, illegal or not, the children of such immigrants, travelers, people at bus stops or in airports. We hear other languages spoken in the streets: Spanish, Tagalog, German, Chinese. Even people who are not foreigners are perceived to be, such as the black

person on the light rail or the Muslim family that comes into a restaurant. Foreigners are everywhere in our country and we have to interact with them, some of us on a regular basis. The question is: how do we interact with them, how do we perceive them, and by what standard do we judge them? Perhaps of equal importance is the question how ought we treat and judge them? This reflects the Jesuit question how ought we to live and how ought we care for the whole person, *cura personalis*? As an honors student at Regis University, these questions are inseparable from my own experiences, and these are the questions I will to pursue in my thesis.

1.2 The touchstone of my thesis: *Othello* by William Shakespeare

In grappling with these large questions of foreigners and perceptions, I turn to the field I know best as a touchstone for my inquiry: the realm of literature, or more specifically the world of William Shakespeare. I have selected one of his more famous plays, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, as my subject of analysis for a number of reasons. Not only has this been my favorite play since the moment I first read it years ago in high school, but it raises these exact questions more acutely than any other play by Shakespeare. Out of all of Shakespeare's works *Othello* is unique. It is a play about a foreigner, a black man, around whom the entire play revolves. Other formidable works such as *The Tempest* and *The Merchant of Venice* do a remarkable job of raising issues of race and foreign treatment, especially with wonderful speeches by Caliban about being a monster who can speak and by Shylock about being human even if he is a Jew. However, *Othello* is unique because it is the story *about* a foreigner in Venetian

society whereas other works of Shakespeare marginalize the foreign and minority characters.

Othello is a unique masterpiece where a black man, a Moor from northern Africa, is the respected and exalted general of a Venetian army. He walks a dangerous balance of two identities, that of his origin and race from Africa against that of his status and social position in Venice. He navigates in a society that treats him on two levels, one according to his race and another to his rank. Some would call his skin color an abomination and Othello unfit to wed a pure white Venetian woman. Others revere his every word as a general and peace-keeper and would follow him to any end. In many ways Othello is the epitome of foreign identity. He withstands harsh racism and yet he has had tremendous success in establishing himself in Venetian society. In his marriage to the white Desdemona he raises a scandal with her father Brabantio who believes nothing short of magic could have caused his daughter to fall in love with a dark and “sooty” thing as Othello (Shakespeare 1.2.89). His best friend Iago admits in secret that he despises Othello without motive, speaking harsh words about his blackness and his undeserved position, yet he continues the façade that he is an honest and true friend. Despite this heavily prejudiced opposition, Othello maintains a respectable position in Venetian society and is seen by the senate as the most suited to save Cyprus from the Turks above any other Venetian general. Even on Cyprus when the battle is averted, Othello is a true upstanding individual who does not get drunk in festivities like his soldiers, who passes judgment fairly and firmly against drunken Cassio, and who treats his wife with equality

and respect. Though not a man of nobility, Othello acts the most nobly in this play until his engineered fall by his deceptive friend Iago.

1.3 Where to Begin

There is much to mine from this play. I could examine the pigmentation of skin and how obvious it is when you are the only person in a crowd of such skin color, the various stolen glances from people who know just from your appearance that you are somehow different. Indeed, the sharp contrast of black and white, “an old black ram / Is topping your white yew” as Iago puts it to Brabantio (Shakespeare 1.1.97-98), the various uses of black being associated with evil and white with purity, and the many times Othello is explicitly referred to as black in contrast to everyone else are fruitful ground to tackle the struggles of a foreigner. But this somehow did not seem enough of a point to pursue in such depth as I would like.

Perhaps more interesting than inherent color differences are a person’s background, cultural codes, and history. The relationship between Italy and Moors in the 1600s is a fascinating arena, full of racial conflict, immigration, exploitation, and misunderstandings. Where does Othello come from? He says he was a slave once: was he born in northern Africa and taken to Venice to serve? Was he a slave in Africa liberated by a Venetian tour? So much of Othello’s backstory is missing and what we have of it stands in a measure of doubt against the other mythic stories he tells of anthropophagi and cannibals and magically infused handkerchiefs—stories which indicate his otherness as all in Venice are normally-formed humans with no access to magic. At what point in

his complicated and rich life did Iago meet him? Did Othello grow up in Venice or did he come after he was a grown and free man? If he came later, when did Othello learn to speak the Italian language spoken in Venice?

As a linguist, this last question interests me the most. What is the nature of Othello's language, and is there something intrinsic that sets him apart from all the others? A Moor with the kind of background he claims to have would necessarily grow up with a North African native language. He had to learn the language of Venice later in life which is impressive given the quality of Othello's speech. Among Shakespeare's many characters, Othello gains much praise for his language skills, speaking with an eloquence that sets him apart. Imogen Stubbs, a Royal Shakespeare Company actress who played Desdemona in the 1990 production, sympathizes with Desdemona's love for Othello saying, "He's an exotic, glamorous man who speaks with the most wonderful eloquence" (*Shakespeare Uncovered: Othello with David Harewood*). It was this very eloquence that first captivated me when I encountered the play in high school.

Language serves many functions for those who realize what a potent tool it is. Some characters in Shakespeare use it as a weapon, like Caliban who declares to Prospero, "You taught me language, and my profit on 't / Is I know how to curse" (*Tempest* 1.2.368-69). Some use it surgically, like Shylock who takes the idiom "a pound of flesh" literally (*Merchant of Venice* 4.1.307). Hamlet makes language an art form and instructs his actors to speak "trippingly on the tongue" (*Hamlet* 3.2.2), whereas Mercutio makes language a gag and a game until Romeo declares "Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace! / Thou talks't of nothing" (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.4.100-01). But Othello—how does Othello

use his language? Does he wield his language to enchant and seduce as he does for Desdemona and the senate? Are Othello's words harmless and impotent as Brabantio insists when he says, "But words are words. I never yet did hear / That the bruised heart was piercèd through the ear" (*Othello* 1.3.249-50). Or is there something more powerful at work with Othello's language?

Language is a medium through which we interact with the world. We can communicate love, exchange power and authority, and perform our identities with language. Its capacity for human interaction is virtually limitless. For Othello language is one of his greatest tools. It has the ability to include and exclude, to ironize and confide, to seduce and manipulate. All of these impact who Othello is. Language is a window into Othello's very identity.

One of the hardest struggles of a foreigner is developing the skill to navigate in a foreign language. How often do we judge others to be unintelligent, not worth listening to, or incapable of comprehending based on how well they speak our language? It wouldn't matter if one person was a professor at a formidable university in China if they cannot properly ask what the lunch special is in English. It is through our own language that we decide whether or not someone is capable and smart. Likewise it is through the Venetian language that Othello is judged by his peers, even if it is not his native language.

Othello's language mastery is complicated and dynamic. It informs us who he is as well as who he tries to be. Not only is Othello performing a part of his identity based on the social pressures he faces, but he also displays an essential self that exists beyond his performed identity. The former identity is malleable and fleeting while the latter is

unchanging. We can see the conflict of identities that he struggles with in his language as well as the power dynamics he plays. Determining the relationship between language and Othello's identity, how it is used as a means of judgment based on the way we are expected to speak, and how language impacts foreigners in society are the key issues of my inquiry. Through this thesis I grapple with the nature of identity as it exists within each of us, the control we have over this identity, and how language and language expectation affects who we are.

Chapter 2 – Latinate Densities, Orientalism, and Performativity Identity

2.1.1 Exposition

How do we use language to construct and form identity—ours and others? How is our encounter with the *other* informed by the sociolinguistics of language performance? More specifically, how does Othello use his language to establish himself in a foreign court? In the pursuit of these questions I chose a couple theoretical lenses that address identity for a proper examination of the text *Othello* as well as the sociolinguistic themes that permeate it. These theories are traditionally unconnected, not often informing each other, yet I find them inseparable for my examination.

As such, this is a heavily theoretical exploration.

The first and main lens I will use for my scrutiny is the linguistic method. Linguistics as a way of analyzing texts will allow me to examine the density of Latinate words used by each character as a measure of their standing and eloquence as well as the social implications of their speeches. I will also bring to discussion theorist Pierre Bourdieu to examine the social tensions Othello must navigate throughout the play.

Then, as this is a thesis on how non-natives interact with language and society, I will apply Edward Said's theory of Orientalism as the launching point into a critical look at how Othello—and anyone in the position of a non-native—is swayed by and tries to resist the pressures of a social *us* against a personal *other*.

It is my aim to analyze *Othello* at the convergence of these theories, predominantly using linguistics, and to explore them insofar as they intersect without attempting to pursue these theories beyond the borders of this thesis. By overlapping these perspectives, I hope that my view of *Othello* and identity opens up possibilities for new readings of *Othello* and of all texts, including the texts of our own social lives.

2.1.2 The Shakespeare Problem

One of the biggest challenges of a linguistic examination of Shakespearean language is that all of Shakespeare's works invoke the heightened speech of the Elizabethan stage. Even the fools wield language with eloquence and mastery. That was Shakespeare's style. Most characters speak at a high register which makes an inquiry into the effects of language levels and social treatment a bit difficult. This means we need to be careful about looking at the author's style versus looking at relatively higher or lower register.

A language disparity itself separates the play *Othello* from the real world. While *Othello* was originally written in English, the characters themselves would actually be speaking a Venetian dialect of Italian and Othello likely moves from a North African language like Yoruba to the Venetian dialect. These distinctions are discussed later (§ 3.2). Instead, Shakespeare has us view these characters in an English environment and in blank verse. Because the story of *Othello* is not accessed through the native languages of the characters, their linguistic differences are instead represented by Othello's performance of his *otherness* as a matter of his identity.

Despite these distinctions, even across the heightened formation of Shakespeare's characters we can observe significant variances of speech patterns performed from one character to the next. Even the idiolect—the individual dialect—varies in response to social cues and pressures. While static characters like Italian senators chiefly perform at a notably high level of diction, dynamic characters like Iago use their linguistic register to manipulate power dynamics and deceive. Amidst all of this, we can observe a decline of Othello's register and eloquence from the beginning of the play to the end and analyze the peaks and nadirs of his performance. Othello's language change provides key insights into the nature of his identity. When and how does he get upset or jealous and how is this reflected in his language? When he performs at his highest register, in what way is his language informed by his background identity and how does that carry the performance of his present identity as a foreigner in an Italian setting? Is Othello a master of his own language or is his language a master of him? This style of analysis offers a potential way to resolve these questions and through my research I believe we can find a reclamation of the human element—an essential self—under performance.

2.2 Linguistics

2.2.1 Latinate Density

For my inquiry to be possible, it is convenient—necessary even—to have an objective measure of a character's language performance. Without such a measure, claims of characters' eloquence and capabilities would be prone to impressionistic

analysis. I decided to conduct a Latinate density study for in Shakespeare's time, the ratio of Latinate to non-Latinate words historically served as a sign of a person's rank, intelligence, education, and social standing

What is a Latinate density and how does it reveal so much? In simplified terms, the English lexicon is built out of two different language families, Germanic and Latinate. English is a descendant of Proto-Germanic, yet it extensively borrowed words from Latinate languages. While both families are comprised of several language influences on English— Old English and Old Norse on one side and Latin, French, French Latinate, and Greek on the other—there is a clear dividing line between the two families. The donating Italic languages like French and Latin provided specialized words—such as words in law, politics, and cuisine—that marked speakers as members of a superstrate class rather than the base English class. According to Mary DeForest, a professor from University of Colorado at Denver who has done extensive work in Latinate analysis, “The choice of a word from either vocabulary has rhetorical implications” (389). The most important of rhetorical implications is how the division between Latinate and Germanic words expresses the division of intelligent and simple, high class and low, eloquent and plain. Those who are capable of using Latinate words in their diction and choose to do so are able to distinguish themselves as being on the high end of this dichotomy. DeForest explains the social codes of this division when she states, “The ability to use Latinate words is an indicator of education and, consequently, of social class, because the upper class have a greater access to education; of intelligence, because bright people are attracted to education; finally of gender, because males had far greater

access to education than did females” (395). While DeForest is referring to the Regency period of Jane Austen in the early 1800s, her description is applicable to Shakespeare’s time two hundred years prior. This linguistic phenomenon has been a part of the English language since the 1300s, according to DeForest: “After the fourteenth century, Latinate words continued to have a cachet as new words entered the vocabulary from the Continent” (392). Since the fourteenth century, through Shakespeare and the sixteenth century, this language division persists even to our modern day with the arguable exception of her final statement on gender in the West.

While the density of Latinate words in a person’s speech may be subtle, it is uncanny how it can elevate one’s diction and how others tend to perceive the elevation. Intelligence and education can be expressed by using Latinate terms, but too much Latinate leads to a feeling of distance and pretentiousness. According to DeForest, 20%-35% is a good range for sounding smart where 35% to 60% is a dangerous range for pretention or deception (latinometer). Thus, measuring Latinate densities can indicate numerically where a character scores in terms of register, intellect, education, and social class. I use this calculation to measure main characters in *Othello*. However, DeForest also points out that the use of Latinate is indicative of formality, “as formal speech simulates upper-class speech,” whereas “Germanic words create an informal tone, offering intimacy, whereas Latinate words raise walls” (DeForest 393). Thus, it cannot be objectively stated that a high density of Latinate in a person’s discourse indicates intellect while Germanic indicates stupidity. Instead, more Latinate is used in certain social

settings and more Germanic is used where it is appropriate in intimate, friendly, blunt, or confrontational ones.

To not misfire, speakers of English intuitively know when to use Latinate words and when to use Germanic. To describe these various ways of performative language, linguists use the terms *domain* and *range*. Native speakers internalize the expectations of domain and register whereas non-native speakers have not necessarily internalized the language, thus they do not always understand the social differences. These terms can help us understand when and where Latinate and Germanic are expected. *Domain* is a specific topic area within the lexicon. The domain of a medical profession will use several words that would seem foreign to those outside the field. The words that denote certain concepts in one field denote other concepts in another, such as the word *domain* itself which has one meaning in linguistics, but refers to separate administrative control spaces in cyber-space terms. It might also be more appropriate to use more Latinate words in an academic domain than in a sports domain. *Range* refers to the position on an informal-to-formal scale at which one speaks at any given time. A higher range is more formal, polite, and often more sophisticated with Latinate terms. A lower range is informal, rude, or intimate. Everyone can speak at different ranges and do so to adhere to social situations that demand different ranges.

There are some other problems with examining Latinate density. DeForest cautions those attempting to use a Latinate density analysis not to get lost in the scores and percentages:

Nevertheless, the computer has not replaced reading.
Austen's best and brightest characters have high densities,
but so do her nastiest and stupidest. A machine cannot
distinguish between learning and pretentiousness; moral
seriousness and hypocrisy; self-control and formality. Nor
can the computer discern whether low density indicates
stupidity or sincerity. The varying densities take on
meaning only when combined with human judgment.
(DeForest 400)

Indeed in my study there are several points where the score of a character's Latinate density felt contrary to what the social context would have determined or to the character's own development. Not only is it my goal to discover these scores for individual characters but to interpret their meaning in relation to the scores of their interlocutors.

The tool I use for my study comes from DeForest's research and work, an online engine called the Latin-o-meter which analyzes text and categorizes each word and produces a score based on the percentage of words that fall in the Latin language group in origin. The calculation takes a sum total of words in the sample text and then excludes names, foreign words (that is, words not in the English dictionary), and words from Old English that act as function words including articles, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, numbers, and variations on the *to be* and *to have* verbs. The rest of the words are categorized into their language groups. Germanic words, mainly those coming from

Anglo-Saxon, score 0 points for the calculation. French words, including Latin or Greek words that were modified by the French language before entering English, score 0.25 points each. Latin words score 1 point each and Greek words—far less frequent—score 1.25 points each. From these scores a total percentage is calculated with the total words minus the excluded as the denominator and the total points scored per word as the numerator. This calculation is not precisely a traditional Latinate density calculation which would take 100 words and then calculate a total percentage based on an unmodified total of French, French Latinate, Greek, and Latin words. However, DeForest’s nuanced measurement is still accurate and she explains that “to make the contrasts more clear, I excluded the common words [...] and gave different values to words from the classical languages” (latinometer). DeForest’s tool is a consistent and accurate measurement for the sake of this analysis because it is the only tool I use for comparison and DeForest appropriately weighs each category based on their density in the English lexicon and their sociolinguist relation to speakers.

2.2.5 Bourdieu and the Linguistic Market of the Symbolic Order

As Othello’s linguistic mastery is of key interest to me, I want to explore in greater detail just what level of mastery he possesses and in what way he uses it to navigate the Venetian society. In tandem with Latinate density examinations, I will also take a look at how characters in the play use their language in social exchanges in order to gain authority or power. The French sociolinguist Pierre Bourdieu has theorized this play of interests as a linguistic market in which power is encoded symbolically and

exchanged like any other form of capital. Bourdieu defines this market in terms of “Linguistic exchange—a relation of communication between a sender and a receiver” (Bourdieu 502). In Bourdieu’s terms, the speaker, or producer, will wield their language to attain a certain desired effect, often for their own personal gain in respect or authority, to be believed or given attention, while the listener, or consumer, will audit the speech and evaluate its worth for appreciation or obedience. This market system of language is an “exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital (symbolic of the representation of buying and selling authority as currency), and a consumer (or market), and which is capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit” (Bourdieu 502). Language is a sign of social wealth in Bourdieu’s market. One form of capital in the market Shakespeare’s characters produce and consume in is Latinate diction, thus analysis in Latinate density can help to specify Bourdieu’s “symbolic exchange.”

Social structures influence each moment of interaction between interlocutors. Those more wealthy in this system are those who possess the virtue of language competence. How much of such wealth does Othello possess? What is his stake in the linguistic market of a foreign system and how does he establish his foothold within the market? One way to begin answering this question is to try to discern Othello’s capacity for production, for as Bourdieu explains, “The value of the utterance depends on the relationship of power that is concretely established between the speakers’ linguistic competence, understood both as their capacity for production and as their capacity for appropriation and appreciation” (Bourdieu 503). Bourdieu calls to question Othello’s

capacity to produce language in the Venetian market and especially raises the question of appropriation. To what extent does Othello have to appropriate the capital of the Venetian market? In order to gain respect and authority, Othello has to take the value in his own hands and turn it to his own advantage.

Othello shows his control over the situation of the Venetian senate and his control over his own identity as it is performed in such a setting. But Othello's control over his performance and, in turn, his linguistic mastery and profit, deteriorates when he is placed in a situation of emotional distress and privacy. Othello's first major drop in his Latinate command occurs when he is warned against jealousy for Desdemona by Iago. Like the scene before the Venetian senate, Othello is forced to defend himself privately to Iago and delivers a monologue to do so, but this time he is lacking the successful elements of his last speech and he is not entirely convinced of his own words. Though he speaks to his friend, Othello loses a measure of his capacity and linguistic profit. In his monologue that begins, "Think'st thou I'd make a lie of jealousy, / To follow still the changes of the moon" (Shakespeare 3.3.208-23), Latinate words are scarce and among his few elevated words are, ironically, the French words *changes* and *jealousy*. Reflected in these lines, his entire monologue to defend himself drops to a Latinate density of a mere 18%, little more than half the density of his first monologue. This difference can be explained by the situation Othello finds himself in. On the one hand, Othello speaks from emotional instability as a result of Iago's manipulation beginning to take root. On the other, he is in a familiar setting speaking to a friend and is not required by social authority to elevate his speech to the register of the senate. In the comfort of his friendship, Othello can get away

with speaking on a lower register and can be less concerned for maximizing linguistic profit as in an authoritative setting. Unfortunately for Othello, if this is the case Iago does not drop his register in a similar fashion even though he is in the private confines of friendship. In the lines before Othello's monologue in this scene Iago still maintains a relatively high 25% Latinate density in his diction. One reading would suggest that Iago speaks respectfully up to a superior officer, yet his elevated diction is more of a barrier and a tool of deception. By not speaking at the lower register expected between friends Iago distances himself from Othello and deceives him. Iago gains more symbolic capital on Othello because Othello was not aware he needed to be exchanging at that level of marketplace.

What is most fascinating about this monologue is the appearance of the word "exsufflicate" in the lines, "When I shall turn the business of my soul / To such exsufflicate and blown surmises" (Shakespeare 3.3.212-13). Of course there are many ways to interpret this part, but the widely accepted definition for the word *exsufflicate* is, according to the OED, "puffed up, inflated, or windy." The OED classifies this word as obscure and rare, with a questionable definition, and indeed it must be so because the only citation of this word in English literature is this line from Othello. The Moor invented this word on the spot and it is never seen again in Shakespearean works or any other work in English. While the Latinometer categorizes this word as Latinate in origin, it is unclear as there seems to be no etymology other than its close relation to the Latinate verb *exsufflate* meaning "to blow out." What, then, is the meaning of this word in Othello's speech which already evidences a significant loss of control over the elevated

diction of his language? Perhaps this word represents another failure of Othello's mastery: his attempt to use an elevated word results in a solecism that further disintegrates his ethos—ethos as a military general whom senators trust to defend Cyprus.

The symbolic exchange backfires on Othello for, to extend Bourdieu's economic metaphor, he tries to counterfeit his language. The invented word is a forgery and no one in the audience would know what it means. As the language he employs throughout the play is his second language, this moment could be seen as evidence of the dissonance between Othello and his second language, a mistake akin to a child inventing a word to fill the lack of a suitable one or simply the failure to properly pronounce it. He tries to capitalize on Latinate words through counterfeit but the effort fails as the market is beyond the individual acts of individual people.

2.2.3 Latinate Density Differences among Six Characters

Through the density of Latinate words in characters' speech, we can see the struggles of social power and the expression of eloquence as they negotiate Bourdieu's market. We can even track Othello's linguistic deterioration as his moral code and social faculties deteriorate under Iago's manipulation. By mere comparison between averages of Latinate densities in monologues, it is easy to begin to see differences of speech elevation between characters (see *Figure 1: Latinate densities of monologues of main characters*).

Speaker	Latinate Density	Scene	Line	Word Categories						Text
				Total	Excluded	French	Germanic	Greek	Latinate	
Desdamona	27%	1.3	209-18	76	47	7	16	0	6	My noble father,Edo
Desdamona	33%	1.3	283-94	102	63	4	23	0	12	That I did love the M
Desdamona	15%	3.3	68-82	196	123	17	49	0	7	Why, then, to-morro
Desdamona	31%	3.4	140-50	81	53	3	17	0	8	Alas, thrice-gentle C
Desdamona	30%	3.4	160-75	111	57	6	34	2	12	Something, sure, of s
Desdamona	21%	4.2	175-93	140	87	5	38	0	10	O good Iago,What sh
Emilia	16%	4.3	97-115	159	93	15	44	0	7	But I do think it is the
Iago	31%	1.1	8-35	191	110	21	41	5	14	Three great ones of t
Iago	24%	1.1	44-71	206	123	15	52	0	16	O, sir, content you;E
Iago	41%	1.3	361-75	135	80	11	25	3	16	Virtue! a fig! 'tis in o
Iago	21%	1.3	426-47	189	110	14	52	0	13	Thus do I ever make
Iago	31%	2.1	234-40	317	169	26	83	1	38	Do thou meet me pr
Iago	24%	2.1	308-34	223	128	14	62	2	17	That Cassio loves her
Iago	20%	2.3	235-261	210	130	14	54	1	11	Touch me not so nea
Iago	27%	2.3	356-82	220	129	18	54	3	16	And what's he then t
Roderigo	20%	1.1	135-155	175	103	11	49	0	12	Sir, I will answer any
Brabantio	38%	1.2	80-100	163	92	9	38	3	21	O thou foul thief, wh
Othello	29%	1.3	91-111	159	86	18	39	2	14	Most potent, grave, a
Othello	22%	1.3	149-96	347	192	32	98	4	21	Her father loved me;
Othello	18%	3.3	208-23	140	79	13	40	0	8	Think'st thou I'd mal
Othello	31%	3.3	299-318	181	112	13	38	0	18	This fellow's of exce
Othello	20%	4.2	57-74	263	145	17	82	0	19	Had it pleased heave
Othello	10%	5.2	310-32	189	110	12	62	0	5	Behold, I have a wea
Othello	23%	5.2	397-417	152	91	9	40	0	12	Soft you; a word or tv

Figure 1: Latinate densities of monologues of main characters—Latin density scores given by percentiles where *Scene* cites when the monologue was performed and *Line* cites the beginning and end of the monologue. *Total* is the sum of all words in the monologue and the *Word Categories* break down how many words fall into each category. *Text* shows the first few words of the each monologue as reference.

While every character and every line provides rich possibilities for a linguistic analysis, I have selected six characters to examine. I have also decided to look only at monologues because they provide a larger, substantial sample of text to analyze. Monologues are texts where the character is able to speak uninterrupted, thus it is not an interaction. Interactions have the potential to create confounds in dialogue because characters must respond to other characters, thus adapting their speech to the interaction. Shifts in dialogue respond to external change causing us to gauge the responses to the exterior, whereas shifts within a monologue are therefore responding to internal changes and we can gauge the interior. The main three characters in question, Othello, Iago, and

Desdemona, I will look at more closely as they each have several monologues in the play. The other three, Brabantio, Roderigo, and Emilia, I will give less attention as they each have only one monologue, though these characters still contribute to the comparative examination.

The character with the highest average Latinate density in speech is unsurprisingly the character with the highest social status: Signore Brabantio at 38% (see *Figure 2: Latinate density averages of main characters*). As a senator on the Venetian court, Signore Brabantio is educated and relatively wealthy. He is also the oldest character giving him the advantage of age over the other five. Below him are the Moorish general and his son-in-law Othello, his daughter and Othello's wife Desdemona, the lieutenant Iago, Iago's wife Emilia, and Iago's lackey Roderigo. By simple status of rank Othello is the next in the hierarchy as he is a general in the Venetian army. However, the man beneath Othello, Iago, is next in the hierarchy of Latinate density averages scoring a 27.3% density in his surveyed monologues. Iago is noble like Brabantio, an officer in the army, and apparently well-off economically. Because of his stable elevated place in society, he is expected to be educated and eloquent in his discourse and proves to be so with a high level of Latinate words in his lexicon. The next high score of Latinate averages is Desdemona at 26.1%, again unsurprising. She is the daughter of a senator which gives her considerably high standing, yet her sex limits her in the social sphere of the Renaissance, which places women beneath the men in society. Even though Iago is on a lower social rank than her, she demonstrates a slightly lower command of elevated

diction which corresponds to her slightly lower rank to Iago as a woman and her general confinement to domestic situations.

Speaker	Average Density
Desdmona	26.17%
Emilia	16%
Iago	27.38%
Roderigo	20%
Brabantio	38%
Othello	21.86%

Figure 2: Latinate density averages of main characters—
Averages of the Latinate density scores of monologues of main characters as shown in *Figure 1*

Despite being above Iago in rank and above Desdemona in the social construct of Renaissance marriages, Othello's average Latinate density falls beneath them both by a remarkable margin. Of his monologues Othello's average density is a mere 21.8%. This social hierarchy is therefore subverted as Othello falls much lower in his performance of elevated speech than his rank would lead one to assume. This is easily explained, however, as Othello's standing is also subverted by virtue of his race and cultural origins. Because he is a black man in an Italian court, the Venetian society adjusts their expectation to treat him as an *other* instead of a Venetian. Othello's exact position in Italian society is rather complicated, influenced by his time as a slave, his otherness as a black man, his militaristic achievements, and his influence in the courts—discussed in detail later.

The bottom two in the hierarchy of Latinate averages are Roderigo and Emilia, scoring a 20% and 16% respectively. Again these numbers align with the social hierarchy established, as the wife of a soldier, a woman, would fall below a male soldier. These two

characters as well as Brabantio are difficult to adequately assess due to their smaller role in the play and each only have one monologue to analyze.

While comparing where each character scores in terms of Latinate levels can help us situate characters in society, comparing variations within a single character reveals how they change and interact with each situation. Characters with multiple monologues provide a range of data that reveal their dynamic responses as the play unfolds.

2.2.4 Othello's appeal

Othello's first monologue is among his higher performances in Latinate density, scoring 29%, and maintains wonderful rhetoric in his defense for wooing and marrying Desdemona. For the reader's convenience, I have transcribed this monologue below and underlined all words that count towards the Latinate Density score. These words include those of Latin origin, distinguished in purple, those of French origin, distinguished in red, and those of Greek origin, distinguished in blue. These colors coincide with the color scheme of my primary source engine, the Latin-o-meter. Function words and minor words are excluded from the calculation.

As would be expected, the level of Latinate words used in a monologue changes based on the situation the speaker is responding to. Despite his lower average, Othello demonstrates a significant mastery of elevated words when he comes before the seigniors in court and defends his marriage to Desdemona:

Most potent, grave, and reverend
signiors,

My very noble and approved good
masters,

That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,
 It is most true; true, I have married her:
 The very head and front of my offending
 Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in
 my speech,
 And little bless'd with the soft phrase of
peace:
 For since these arms of mine had seven
 years' pith,
 Till now some nine moons wasted, they
 have used
 Their dearest action in the tented field,
 And little of this great world can I speak,

More than pertains to feats of broil and
battle,
 And therefore little shall I grace my
cause
 In speaking for myself. Yet, by your
gracious patience,
 I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver
 Of my whole course of love; what drugs,
 what charms,
 What conjunction and what mighty
magic,
 For such proceeding I am charged withal,
 I won his daughter.

In this speech, Othello's Latinate density is 29%, a respectable number. Of all his monologues, this is his highest score which is ironic given the content of his speech. He comes before the court and begins with the noble address, "Most potent, grave, and reverend seigniors, / My very noble and approved good masters" (Shakespeare 1.3.91-92). This address begins in the first two lines with a beautiful display of his capabilities in the language, using the Latinate words *potent*, *grave*, and *reverend* in succession as well as the French words *very*, *noble*, *approved*, and *masters*. Othello shows that he is perfectly capable of meeting the seigniors on their level while simultaneously showing his respect to them by stating their rank above him, calling them "masters." The balance of humility and eloquence ennobles the Moor Othello. The irony then comes in the middle of his speech when he very strategically renounces his ethos in order to boost it. Othello's ethos, his authority to marry Desdemona, is under question. Thus in this context he must foreground his ethos to take control of the scene. Before he begins his verbal defense he condescends himself by admitting he is not capable of speaking eloquently, saying,

“Rude am I in my speech” (Shakespeare 1.3.96). From the polysyllabic words of his first lines, *potent*, *reverend*, *noble*, *approved*, he drops in register to monosyllabic words that are all lower in diction except for the one Latinate word *rude*. Ironically, *rude* describes Othello’s vulgar and uneducated status. This line itself offers many layers of complication, for he takes this pause from his otherwise Latinate monologue to admit he has no mastery of heightened speech and then follows it with a well-crafted defense full of high diction, sophisticated rhetoric, and eloquence. In this he gains respect and attention by lowering their expectations of him and humbling himself. Hidden within this simple sentence is the poetic syntax he employs to convey his meaning. Despite his words to humble him, Othello still shows mastery of the language by using this poetic inversion of the subject-verb order. Instead of saying, “I am rude,” he says, “Rude am I,” which evokes the archaic form as well as foregrounding the word *rude* by saying it first. Even when he is trying to admit his inadequacies, Othello still reveals his linguistic mastery.

But why would Othello need to qualify his speech like this in front of the senate? He is perfectly capable of speaking at a high Latinate register and is often praised as an eloquent speaker. What reason does he have to subvert his ability? He could be humbling himself, but what does he have to gain by doing so? Othello is a speaker in the Venetian linguistic market and he is haggling for a different value in his speech. Bourdieu explains that “one can see in passing that strategies for subversion of objective hierarchies in the sphere of language, as in the sphere of culture, are *also* likely to be strategies of condensation, reserved for those who are sufficiently confident of their position in the

objective hierarchies to be able to deny them without appearing to be ignorant or incapable of satisfying their demands” (504). Thus Othello, who does choose to deny his ability when he says “Rude am I in speech,” is confident of his position and gains even more value in his words by saying this simple sentence, condescending to the Venetian court that tests him. He highlights what little expectation he, a Moor, has in mastery of the language, then proceeds to deliver an incredibly eloquent speech to defend his marriage to Desdemona. By subverting his ability before the senators he gains a greater profit, but this move is especially effective for Othello because he is a Moor.

2.3.1 Orientalism

The social pressures that affect how Venetians expect Othello to perform are deeply rooted in Othello’s ethnic background as a Moor. The sociologist and postcolonial scholar Edward Said developed a theory called Orientalism to address expectations that stem from ethnic disparities like Othello’s. Orientalism looks at the perceived differences between a clearly divided “us” versus a “them” or “other.” In his book Orientalism, Said explains that “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (2). These apparently geographic terms may be used metaphorically to characterize a distinction between North Africa and Europe. Said explains that the Orient refers to any country that would be perceived as *other* to the Western world, including countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, thus the Moors of Shakespeare’s time definitely fall in this category. Being a Palestinian American himself, Said has had

personal experience on both sides of the Orientalism divide much like Othello himself. Different qualities are attributed to each side of this divide and society tends to assume these qualities are fundamental traits for those on their respective sides. People on the Occident side, the side of the *us*, are assumed to uniformly be more intelligent, more educated, more logical, less driven by emotions, and less physically inclined. People on the Oriental side, the side of the *other*, are assumed to be less intelligent, less educated, less logical, less moral, more emotionally driven, more physically capable, and more sexual and sensual. Exoticism is also an element of the *other*.

While this is a theory that describes social constructs and not the actual features of people on either side of the divide, Said reminds us that “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative” (Said 1-2). While generalized and hopefully not true representations of the essential qualities of the people in question, Orientalism is not imagined and has a strong foothold in the real views of society both historically and today. There are clear cultural differences between the Orient and the Occident which contribute to assumptions about the two. These differences, being perceived by members of one or the other, are root causes for the Orientalist perceptions even if the assumptions are not necessarily true. From the perception, cyclically, Orientalism then produces social consequences.

While Said’s work was originally focused on European colonialism, it also applies to any field where such essentialist divisions of character are made. Once again referring to DeForest’s description of the social perceptions and qualities applied to

Latinate densities, “The gulf between these two vocabularies falls along an ancient fault line, which, in classical antiquity, divided the Greek from the barbarian; the aristocrat from the plebeian; reason and self-control from passion; culture from nature; male from female” (DeForest 389). Her language is remarkably similar to that of Edward Said, who expresses a similar divide of social perception and characteristics across race and ethnicity. We can just as easily apply the assumptions of the Occident to high-Latinate speakers while applying the Orient assumptions to predominantly Germanic speakers. Just as Orientalism can play a role in the markets for power at a cultural level, so too does this language gulf provide a force for power in the linguistic market. As Said explains, “Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 3). Orientalism can be a power play, just like the linguistic market, and when both are used in tandem the effect can be that much more severe.

2.3.2 A brief history of Italy and Elizabethan England in Relation to *Othello*

In Renaissance Italy, many populations or ethnicities would fall under Said’s category of the *other*. It applied to the Moors in one sense, but in a deeper and more biased sense it applied to the Turks. It was a great insult to say someone “turns Turk” meaning they turn from logic and reason to emotion and bestiality and even turn on their own creed. The Turkish religion, Islam, was likewise viewed as a form of “otherness” and we should not ignore the fact that Islam at the period when *Othello* was staged had spread throughout Northern Africa—Othello’s homeland. The Ottoman Empire was prolific in 1600, spanning Greece, modern-day Iraq and Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and the

northern coast of Africa. Italy was practically surrounded by the Ottoman Empire's land, and Cyprus was merely a tiny island tucked in the Mediterranean Sea deep within the territory of the Ottomans. While there are actually no Turks in this play, the setting is an Italian colonial outpost on Cyprus where an Italian army came to defend the island from a reportedly mobile Turkish army—an army that proves to not be a threat when they arrive. Thus, long before the play begins it might be safe to assume that Othello was once either Muslim or he was a slave to Muslims. Not only this, but the insult to “turn Turk” was a real concept wherein the Turks would give their enemies one last chance to repent their ways and convert to Islam so that Allah may have mercy on their souls before they executed them. According to the Shakespeare critic Imtiaz Habib, “That act of betrayal for Christian thinking coined the popular phrase ‘turning Turk’” (Habib 217). Several Christian soldiers actually did convert before their deaths at this time, thus they gave up their beliefs and their creed and “turned Turk.”

Italy at this time period was not particularly hospitable to the Turks and Muslims while Elizabethan England was similarly prejudiced against racial and religious others. In Shakespeare's time discrimination was so severe that Queen Elizabeth officially ordered them out of the country. This makes Shakespeare's decision to write a tragic play that sympathizes with a black person in power a particularly radical and bold move. Diana-Adesola Mafe, a literary critic and historian interested in uncovering the parallels between Othello and the Yoruba culture and myth system, argues that Shakespeare must have been aware of the racial issues permeating English society:

If Shakespeare was not necessarily aware of the Queen's edict and the subsequent banishment of black people from England, he was likely aware of the categorization of black people as an Other (an awareness indicated in *Othello*). I will further state that, far from being coincidental, Shakespeare's construction of the black character, Othello, three years after the edict, was informed by the African's situation in and outside Elizabethan England. Othello, the Moor, epitomizes that category of Other established by Queen Elizabeth or, as Butler-Evans avers, 'Othello [. . .] becomes the symbolic embodiment of the non-European outsider'(143). (49)

When Shakespeare wrote this play was definitely aware of the racial tensions between Europeans and non-Europeans at that point in history. It is a piece consciously reflective of this tension and vigorously relevant to the greater problems of race and judgment, even prosecution, based on race.

2.3.3 Orientalism in Othello

Othello begins the play with his highest level of Latinate density in his first monologue to the senators at an impressive 29% density, then fluctuates in his monologues throughout the play as situations change and Iago strategically manipulates Othello's doubts and convictions. By the last scene, we see Othello at his nadir—

mentally, emotionally, and therefore linguistically. This is the greatest Orientalist moment when Othello finally becomes the monster and murders Desdemona, then threatens to take his own life. He is no longer capable of thinking for himself at the beginning of this scene when the Venetians and the senators come into his bed chamber and find him and his near-dead wife. His is subsumed by raw emotion—jealousy, anger, fear, and most acutely, guilt. To fulfil the archetype of the *other* at this moment, having been degraded to all other aspects of Venetians *othering* him and Othello *othering* himself by allowing his emotions to supplant his reason, Othello loses his mastery of language and delivers a monologue at 10% Latinate density—the lowest of all monologues. This time, he is no longer defending himself before a court or a friend but confessing his wrongdoing and warding off those public figures that have invaded his private space. Even Othello’s syntax in this monologue is fragmented, containing incomplete clauses, “Even like thy chastity” (24), brief invocations, “O ill-starr’d wench!” (20), and a caesura on almost every line. His speech is no longer charged with logos but with overwhelming pathos. Compare this to another character’s moment of emotional distress when Signor Brabantio is told his daughter has been stolen and is now “making the beast with two backs” with the impure Othello. As we saw earlier, Brabantio’s Latinate density in this monologue in scene two is 38%. Even under distress and charged with anger, the model Italian noble retains his mastery of language and is able to speak intelligibly with long, complex syntax. Brabantio is the ideal *us* and Othello is a prototypical *other*, thus Brabantio is able to control his emotions, retain his intellect, and never once resorts to physical action. Othello, fallen to the form of *otherhood*, does

exactly what Said says the *us* perceives the *other* to be, and resorts to emotionally charged physical action—that is, stabbing himself. While his suicide may seem like an *othering* action on the surface, I will argue that it is a restorative action. In this final act, Othello holds his *other* self accountable and attempts to restore his Venetian *us* self to its dominant position while also reclaiming the *other* identity from the colonizer (§4.3.2).

Remarkably, Othello is the only *other* in this play. There are no other characters who are not Venetian in the play, so no other character can share in Othello's alienation. Even though they go to Cyprus, every character encountered there is still Venetian. Shakespeare had plenty of opportunities to introduce other characters of Other status, a Cyprian local, a Turkish ambassador, a soldier from another group taking rest in Cyprus, and yet he closes all of these doors to keep Othello the only solitary lonely Other in the whole play, because the play is about one *other* versus an entire cast of *us*.

An Orientalist approach to Othello is not exactly new, but it is my hope that using Orientalism as a way to access the complex linguistic analysis I wish to conduct offers new perspectives into the text. By overlapping these theories I strive for what Said himself encouraged: "I try also to explain how Orientalism borrowed and was frequently informed by 'strong' ideas, doctrines, and trends ruling the culture. Thus there was (and is) a linguistic Orient, a Freudian Orient, a Spenglerian Orient, a Darwinian Orient, a racist Orient—and so on" (Said 22). Though Orientalism is only a part of my thesis, I approach Othello, in part, as a linguistic Orient.

2.4.1 Looking Forward

There is much to consider with all these theories, yet, as I stated above, it is not my goal to explore each theory to its fullest extent but merely to examine the points of intersection. I believe it is necessary to have all of these theories in mind—concerning identity as an (anti)orientalist performance within a linguistic marketplace—in order to give a linguistic inquiry into my questions the proper respect and attention it deserves. To merely approach *Othello* with a linguistic analysis would be to ignore the crucial implications of race and ethnic background that have such a dramatic influence on a person's language. To examine linguistic orientalism without understanding language as a mode of performing one's self—ethnicity and the negotiations of a foreigner in a new society included—would also be a disservice to Othello who is constantly required to demonstrate his ability and seduce the courts he faces. As such these theoretical lenses are inseparable for this thesis.

How does a foreigner retain and express their identity with these linguistic and socially biased restrictions? What is the relationship between a foreigner and the society they now operate in? In the following chapters I will examine these questions in further detail, beginning with the tensions that stem from the expectations that are placed upon Othello as an *other* against the level at which he actually performs.

Chapter 3 – The Margin of Excellence

3.1.1 Language and Background

Often all one has to do to determine a person's place of origin is to hear them speak. Accents, dialects, and colloquialisms carry the marks of regional, economic, and linguistic background. We can hear if a person is from the north or south of America, if their first language was French, or even if they come from a lower class. The way someone speaks can have imbedded within it a signal that they are different, and sometimes an outsider. These differences establish for us at a subconscious level a system of expectations, informed by our society, that we will then impose upon the speaker. Othello is marked with this linguistic sign. Though he may try to mask it, it still exists and his peers are aware of it.

3.1.2 The Margin of Excellence

What is the margin of excellence? It is a comparison between the way in which someone is *expected* to perform against the way they actually perform. An expectation bar is set by society, a level of eloquence or skill, a level of formality or respect. If the one being judged performs at a rate beneath this bar, they have a negative margin and are judged negatively, but if they perform above this bar they have a positive margin and are judged likewise. What is crucial here is the degree by which the performer surpasses this

bar or falls beneath this bar, not the actual level of performance itself. That is why I refer to the margin of excellence, not the actual level of excellence itself.

As a thought experiment, take a few of the characters already discussed from *Othello*. While it is difficult to objectively measure performed excellence, it is even more difficult to measure expected performance. Much of what follows is built on speculation and assumption. For this thought experiment, imagine that both performance excellence and expectation can be measured on a scale of 1 to 10, and that we have determined the scores for Othello, Iago, and Brabantio. For the object of this performance, let us examine these characters' level of Latinate density as we have been in previous chapters.

Brabantio is an Italian noble and a senator, and as such he is expected to perform at a high level of diction. Let us say his expected performance score on the eloquence graph is an 8. As he has a fairly high command of his language and publically speaks with a Latinate-dense discourse, scoring a high 38%, his actual score is also an 8. Thus, the margin from what is expected of him and how he actually acts is 0. Readers and other characters in Brabantio's society do not pay him much attention nor give him praise for his high achievement because he does not deviate from what is expected of him. His lack of deviance is therefore unremarkable as befits a margin of 0.

Iago is also nobility but not as high class or well respected as Brabantio. Let us assume the score at which he is expected to perform is a 7, a mid-high range but not terribly high. Then, as Iago speaks with an impressive Latinate percentage and even exceeds Brabantio at his apex of 41%, let us assume he actually achieves a 9 in his performance. Thus, Iago's excellence is higher than what is expected of him and his

margin of excellence is a 2. We as readers and the society of Venice judge based on this margin and have a positive response to how well-spoken Iago is, even if his words are meant to deceive and undercut.

Othello, now, begins at a very low score for his expected level of performance. Othello does not come to a Venetian court with high expectation as he is not a native speaker of the language, comes from a slave class (much lower than a noble class), is black and African thus an *other* with all the assumptions of unintelligence attached to that, and is less educated than most Venetians he encounters. For these reasons, let us assume Othello has an expected score of 3. Despite all of these pressures against him, Othello surprises and impresses his society and the readers when he comes to court with an incredibly high level of Latinate diction and a smooth rhetoric. Even though Othello's diction wavers throughout the play, he is doubtless an eloquent and intelligent speaker, attaining a 31% at his highest. Let us give him a score of 7, for both Brabantio and Iago demonstrate that they are capable of speaking with a higher register than he, but not by much. While Othello still performs below both of these characters, his margin is a remarkable 4 in this model and is more worthy of attention and praise than Brabantio's 0 or even Iago's 2. At least within this thought experiment, we can see why Othello might be judged with more respect and praise than the others we compare him to.

In reality, these social expectations and performances are not nearly as simple. Several variables are constantly at play to establish a dynamic and complex level of expectation that is not easily analyzed without getting lost in the abstract. A person's background, including language, race, and upbringing, helps determine our expectations

about them. How we judge them is based on the margin of their performance against their expectation. In order to give Othello a fair treatment in my analysis and not merely talk about his Latinate density levels compared to his peers, it is necessary to get some sort of idea about where his expectation might lie as an outsider in a Venetian court.

3.2.1 Determining Othello's Level of Expectation in a Venetian Society

There are many ways that Othello is set apart from his fellow Venetians in the play, some more significant than the color of his skin. To grasp these differences and see what linguistic foundation Othello stands on requires a synthesis of all the factors for Othello's background identity and therefore his language capacity. Being a foreigner, a non-native speaker of the common language, coming from a life of slavery and then emerging in a military life, Othello has quite a few influences to lower the social expectations for his language performance.

First and foremost, Othello's native language is not the same language as the rest of the Italians. Even though the play is written in English, all the characters would be conversing in a Venetian dialect of Italian. Othello's L1, or native language, is likely of Northern Africa, thus he would have had to learn Italian later in life making the common language between him and his peers his L2, or secondary language. As any speaker of an L2, Othello would be expected to speak with less sophistication. He would be expected to make simple grammatical errors characteristic of an L2, errors to rules which would seem intuitive to the Italians. He might also have a much smaller lexicon as he would have had considerably less time to build this vocabulary.

Given Othello's language barrier, the resulting low expectation actually makes his words worth more on the linguistic market. Othello has a foreign currency exchange rate in his favor. Bourdieu, in his study of Béarn, a French province touching the boarder of Spain with its own Béarnais dialect, weighs the value and authority of the mayor's speech commemorating the death of a Béarnais poet in 1974. Bourdieu explains that the value of the mayor's words dramatically increased because the speech was in the regional dialect Béarnais instead of standard French. "No one," Bourdieu insists, "and especially not a provincial journalist, would think of praising the mayor's French in the same way as his Béarnais" (Bourdieu 504). This is exactly the reason why Othello is praised for his language capacity. One could even rephrase Bourdieu's words to apply to Othello: no one, and especially not a Venetian senator, would think of praising the Othello's North African L1 in the same way as his Italian L2. It is in Othello's favor to not be a native speaker of Italian and to come with a foreign linguistic background, because then his words carry higher value than the words of the natives. This discrepancy is again due to the difference between what is expected of Othello and what is expected of a native speaker.

Second, Othello comes from a different social class than the others. He was a slave, explaining in his defense to the Senate the tales he shared with Signior Brabantio and Desdemona, "Of being taken by the insolent foe / And sold to slavery, of [his] redemption thence" (1.3.159-60). The danger here is that we as readers must judge to what degree we believe Othello's stories. If he is being honest, then being a slave would have had an impact on his speech. If this is just a claim this could be read as a conscious

move to lower his expectation bar even further meaning he is playing the system. Either reading helps contribute to lowering the social expectation on Othello. This part of Othello's past can produce different expectations depending on when he became a slave. On the one hand, he might have been captured in battle and enslaved, thus the slavery would have little effect on his speech. On the other hand, Othello's register might be expected to be quite low if he was a slave in childhood. Slavery also could indicate that Othello was not educated as a child, which correlates to expectation as DeForest explained, "The ability to use Latinate words is an indicator of education and, consequently, of social class, because the upper class have a greater access to education" (395). Register is affected by social class because the daily discourse for low-class interlocutors is often much lower in register than for high-class nobility. Speech patterns and levels of formality are based on early upbringing and the environments by which that the person is surrounded. Even if Italian was Othello's L1, his register would be drastically lower than that of the Italian nobles, senators, and even merchants.

This leads us to the third point, that Othello's linguistic domain would be limited by his own exposure to such domains. In order to speak within the domain of senators he would have to spend a lot of time inside this domain. As we know, these domains of discourse (that of the senate, Italian noble courts, and the military) are newer to Othello compared to the nobles who have been long exposed to it. We would expect to see a difference of mastery in these domains compared to his peers. Particularly of note in this domain is the ability to be more deceptive, as the abstraction of Latinate words lends to obfuscation or insincerity, qualities that would be useful to an Italian senator. Due to

Othello's lower expectations, his ability or inability to navigate the deception of Latinate-dense diction is evidence of him exceeding or falling below expectation, prospectively.

Fourth, Othello is not a native Italian but instead from Africa, on the other side of the Oriental divide. Based on Said's assessments, the expectation is for Othello to be less intelligent, less logical, and less capable in the area of wit, social combat, and rhetoric. With the traits of the *other* imposed on Othello, he is not expected to be able to produce on the linguistic market: "The relations of power [. . .] are manifested and realized in the fact that certain agents are incapable of applying to the linguistic products offered, either by themselves or others, the criteria that are most favorable to their own products" (Bourdieu 504). As the market is determined by consumers and producers of a certain society Bourdieu shows that the agents who are incapable will not produce. If Othello is seen as incapable through the Oriental lens, he will not be expected to produce, which gives him a certain edge when he proves that he is in fact able.

Fifth, which puts nuanced pressure on Othello's expectations, he is a military general. Being in the military indicates some education and some degree of mastery over the language. His military status is in sharp contrast to his social status from childhood and the oriental position of intellectual expectations. Even though he is not expected to be logical and rhetorical by his *otherness*, he is expected to be tactical and calculating in his military status. A general in Renaissance Italy is not only required to strategize, be well experienced in tactical thinking, and be able to negotiate, but he is also expected to motivate his soldiers, thus practiced in rhetoric. On the other hand, military language is not associated with high Latinate density, as DeForest explains when she examined Jane

Austen's work: "Naval officers use low Latinate densities" (DeForest 392). It is not expected for military personnel to speak with elevated diction as there is less need for it. As a comparison, in one of Shakespeare's most famous war speeches, St. Crispian's day in *Henry V*, the title king uses a low Latinate density when inciting his troops against the French army. This speech, with the famous lines, "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers" (*Henry V*, 4.3.60), only scores a 13% in Latinate diction—this line itself is incidentally all in Germanic. The rhetoric of speeches in war is heavily reliant on pathos instead of logos or ethos and is not a domain that requires high diction.

The effect of being in the military is a double-edged sword for Othello's expectation bar. On the one hand, it enforces the expectation that Othello as an *other* would be more reliant on emotion and not perform at a higher Latinate level. On the other hand, Latinate diction and linguistic mastery are not always directly proportional. There is a reason why Henry V's speech is so famous after all. A lower Latinate density has greater value in the military linguistic market than higher density. If an officer used a level of diction comparable to Brabantio's 38% he would quickly lose value to soldier consumers. This category is not exclusive to Othello, but also includes the other militaristic characters in the play: Iago, Roderigo, and Cassio. In other words, this does not mean that all in the military have qualities of the *other* because of a pathos-influenced register—Henry V is clearly not an *other* in his own kingdom—but neither does it raise the bar for Othello's expected register.

All of these factors taken into consideration, it is clear that the expectations for Othello's linguistic mastery, as imposed by the Italian society, is extremely low. Thus,

Othello's ability to perform at a high level of mastery, even if this level is below Iago's, his marginal difference between his actual performance and his expectations is vast. It is perhaps this disparity of expectation that Iago is truly jealous of. Ultimately it is the culmination of all of these variables—some due to Othello being an *other* and others less so—that creates such a distance between Othello and the foreign market he is in.

3.3.1 Ironizing Othello: Acquiring Language and Acquiring Culture

Ultimately one of the greatest distances Othello experiences from the rest of the characters in the play is his persistent state of irony. Language barriers are a constant source of ironizing a person. When operating in a language not your first, those who use it around you ironically understand more than you do. If you unknowingly make a mistake with a vocabulary word or a grammar point, they catch it and laugh or shrug while you wonder what you did. They are also capable of operating at a faster speed than you, thus able to make plans, tell stories and jokes, and convey information faster than you might be able to comprehend. Thus others around you using this language cannot avoid ironizing you, whether or not that is their intention. While Othello demonstrates perfect mastery of the language used by everyone he encounters, this fact is still true at some level. Not only do language barriers ironize people, but so do cultural barriers. Even if you understand the language used in common discourse, there are customs, unspoken rules, cultural codes, and implications that might still escape you, thus ironizing you further. References to events or histories outside your culture, festivities,

customs, and everyday manners are understood by those who grew up in the culture but might be imperceptible or unknown to those who are not native.

Even if Othello has been in Italy for a substantial number of years, he might still be behind in understanding and enacting all of these cultural norms and thus still in an isolated place among all the other characters in the play. As an outsider, Othello had to learn the Venetian culture just like he had to learn the language, and it is clear that he does not fully understand all the subtleties of this new culture. The disparity here is a byproduct of Othello's evolving habitus, which is a lifestyle, value system, or disposition of a particular group, which Bourdieu explains in detail:

We know, in general terms, the effects that a new experience can have on the habitus depend on the relation of practical 'compatibility' between this experience and the experiences that have already been assimilated by the habitus, in the form of schemes of production and evaluation, and that, in the process of selective re-interpretation which results from this dialectic, the informative efficacy of all new experiences tends to diminish continuously. (Bourdieu 508)

While one might be accustomed to thrive in one habitus, being introduced to a new social system forces them to deal with the several incompatibilities and compatibilities therein. Each one of Othello's new experiences in Venice, even if they occurred long before the play's commencement, is a revision, or, to use Bourdieu's words, reinterpretation, of his

habitus. In essence, this is a process of acquiring a culture. But is Othello's habitus really different? If not, his *othering* cannot be described by pursuing a different lifestyle presently but by having had one in the past.

Much like acquiring a new language, distinguished from learning a language because the former is done in a submersed and sometimes more passive manner while the latter is done in an isolated setting like a classroom and in an active manner, foreigners must also engage in the tricky process of acquiring a new culture. Not knowing the culture can be particularly dangerous for Othello. Take for example when he delivers his "Think'st thou I'd make a lie of jealousy" monologue (Shakespeare 3.3.208-23). Iago is privately warning Othello about the dangers of being jealous while manipulating him to doubting his wife's fidelity. Othello gives his creed of justice in this moment: "I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove; / And on the proof, there is no more but this,— / Away at once with love or jealousy!" (Shakespeare 3.3.221-23). This creed is systematic, militaristic in character, as he is committed to act upon seeing the proof. Justice to Othello is a formula where the order begins with seeing situation, doubting the justice of the situation, proving the injustice, and then responding at once to the injustice. The creed gives room for waiting to determine the truth, but ultimately Othello is a man of action which is built in to his creed.

While this should be a becoming moment for Othello as he asserts a fundamental element of his character, one with a respectable process of justice and a level head to observe and weigh a situation before casting judgment, what follows is Othello's turning point. In reply, Iago insists that Othello is still ignorant in some of Venetian culture:

I know our country disposition well.

In Venice they do let God see the pranks

They dare not show their husbands. Their best conscious

Is not to leave 't undone, but keep 't unknown.

(Shakespeare 3.3.232-35)

Iago seems to say to Othello *you do not know Venetian women the way I do*. He claims that the nature of women in “our country” is to be secretive and deceptive, not chaste. But Iago does not include Othello in this “our.” He insists that these subtleties are a unique part of Venetian culture. Iago asserts himself as an insider, one privy to the cultural codes, and declares Othello the outsider new to the Venetian world. This is not to say lying is a new concept for Othello’s habitus, rather these subtleties are new and difficult to adapt to for Othello which ironizes him even further. Acting as the authority on a culture unknown to Othello, Iago creates a space of vulnerability for Othello, taking advantage of Othello’s foreign understanding, which necessitates Othello’s dependency on Iago’s word.

Iago is not the first one to take advantage of Othello’s not yet fully initiated habitus. Brabantio also puts pressures on Othello being an outsider to their culture when he demands that the Moor justify himself before the senate in courting Desdemona. To prove his innocence, he is beseeched by the senators “But, Othello, speak” and by the Duke, “Say it, Othello” (Shakespeare 1.3.129, 148), that by words he may defend himself. Not only must Othello defend his courtship but he must also demonstrate that he has the proper character to be worthy of Desdemona. Merely having to demonstrate a skill is evidence that the judges do not yet believe you have acquired that skill—in Othello’s

case, the ability to speak as one worthy of a senator's daughter. But Othello argues that he wooed Desdemona with rhetoric, speech, and courting, saying that language is "the only witchcraft I have used" (Shakespeare 1.3.195). Othello's mode of courting is not based in the oriental disposition projected on him, that he "corrupted" Desdemona "by spells and medicines bought of mountebanks," as Brabantio accuses him of doing "with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood, Or with some dram conjured to this effect" (Shakespeare 1.3. 73-74, 122-23), but based on instead the Italian mode of discourse. Here Othello shows that he has in fact acquired enough of the Italian culture to be able to establish a relationship within, in part, the cultural codes of Venice. Much to Brabantio's dismay, the Duke himself validates Othello's speech and commends his demonstration saying, "I think this tale would win my daughter, too" (Shakespeare 1.3.197). Having proven that he used no physical seduction, magic, or charms that he was accused of using to win Desdemona, but won her by words alone, Othello is judged worthy of having her as his wife.

3.4.1 Searching for Othello's Identity

In Bourdieu's linguistic market, Othello gains more value in his words because of this expectation gap. Like a foreign exchange rate, his *otherness* creates low expectation by society which produces positive returns on his language. When his linguistic ability flourishes, it comes out as a massive positive return. The only downside to that is upon establishing this return, the market Othello must face later has increased expectations.

These pressures that lower Othello's expectations create a dynamic and complex environment for establishing Othello's identity, linguistically and socially. This environment is not simply external, however, but has a profound effect on who Othello is internally. Each element discussed, from language and culture acquisition to military status to *otherness* all integrate to inform Othello's personal identity which, in turn, creates an internal gap between his African *other* identity and his Venetian *us* identity.

Chapter 4 – The Deterioration and Redemption of Othello's Self

4.1.1 Othello's Split Identities

We have looked at the social pressures that contribute to Othello's identity externally, but several pressures are at work internally to create a rift in his identity as dramatic and as wide as the rift between the Occident and the Orient, between Latinate and Germanic, between the Venetian and the African. Each of these layers that compose Othello's multi-faceted self fall on one side or the other of a clear identity division line: Othello as an *other* from an African country, base and unaccustomed to Western life, and Othello as a Venetian general and elegant Western *us*.

Throughout the play, Othello is able to balance these two halves of his self. He keeps a Western discourse and etiquette and courting system when defending himself before the senate while wielding his oriental side of mythic stories and mysterious origin to impress them. His relationship with Desdemona also balances this division. He courts her and treats her with respect and love as is the Venetian way, yet he must justify his courtship to Desdemona which is indicative of Othello's isolation from the rest of the characters.

4.1.2 Othello's first defense

The first time Othello is given a chance to stand before an audience and deliver a

significant monologue he shows excellent command of language. For the reader's convenience, I have transcribed this monologue below and underlined all words that count towards the Latinate density score. These words include those of Latin origin, distinguished in purple, those of French origin, distinguished in red, and those of Greek origin, distinguished in blue:

Her father loved me; oft invited me;
 Still question'd me the story of my life,
 From year to year, the battles, sieges,
fortunes,
 That I have passed.
 I ran it through, even from my boyish
 days,
 To the very moment that he bade me tell
 it;
 Wherein I spake of most disastrous
chances,
 Of moving accidents by flood and field
 Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent
 deadly breach,
 Of being taken by the insolent foe
 And sold to slavery, of my redemption
 thence
 And portance in my travels' history:
 Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
 Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose
 heads touch heaven
 It was my hint to speak,—such was the
 process;
 And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
 The Anthropophagi and men whose
 heads
 Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to
 hear
 Would Desdemona seriously incline:
 But still the house-affairs would draw
 her thence:
 Which ever as she could with haste
dispatch,

She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse: which I
 observing,
 Took once a pliant hour, and found good
means
 To draw from her a prayer of earnest
 heart
 That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
 Whereof by parcels she had something
 heard,
 But not intently: I did consent,
 And often did beguile her of her tears,
 When I did speak of some distressful
 stroke
 That my youth suffer'd. My story being
 done,
 She gave me for my pains a world of
 sighs:
 She swore, in faith, twas strange, 'twas
passing strange,
 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:
 She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she
 wish'd
 That heaven had made her such a man:
 she thank'd me,
 And bade me, if I had a friend that loved
 her,
 I should but teach him how to tell my
story.
 And that would woo her. Upon this hint
 I spake:
 She loved me for the dangers I had
pass'd,

And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used:

Here comes the lady; let her witness it.
(Shakespeare 1.3.149-96)

In this scene Segnior Brabantio has just interrupted a late-night senate meeting, discussing the war with the Turks and the contested island of Cyprus, to demand that Othello answers to his crimes of marrying his daughter. After hearing Brabantio's side of the issue, allowing their pressing military and state problems to be set aside, the senators summon Othello to hear his side of the domestic issue. Othello comes before them, is verbally attacked by his new father-in-law Brabantio, and is asked to defend himself upon the Duke's apt command, "Say it, Othello!" (1.3.148).

Othello begins his defense by citing his duties. As a general socially below a senator, Othello was asked, "invited," and "questioned" by Signor Brabantio to tell the exotic stories of his youth (1.3.149-50). As a member of Venetian society and bound not only by the linguistic rules of cooperative discourse but also by his duty to a senator, Othello was obliged to speak. Cooperative discourse routines operate in pairs—question-answer, greeting-greeting, compliment-acknowledgement, command-acceptance or rejection—and dictate the forms of reply that a collocutor is obligated to make. Social convention required that Othello respond to Brabantio's invitations. This sense of obligation is deeply rooted in our language conventions, for, according to linguist Eliaha Chaika from Brown University, "When we consider discourse rules, however, we find a strange paradox. The social rules for language often force us into responding in certain ways [...] Frequently we must respond whether we want to or not" (267). In this rhetorical move, any blame for Othello's seduction by words can be displaced both to

Signor Brabantio for requiring Othello to tell his stories and to Venetian law as Othello has a duty to the senators. More than just required, Othello is granted the authority to speak. As this is a high court of Italy, the linguistic market here is dominated by those in power, as Bourdieu argues, “In other words, the more formal the market is, the more practically congruent with the norms of the legitimate language, the more it is dominated by the dominant, i.e., by the holders of the legitimate competence, authorized to speak with authority” (505). Even though the linguistic market is controlled by those with legitimate competencies in the language in such formal scenarios—that is, the senators are the ones expected to dominate linguistically in the courts—Othello is authorized to speak. He underscores this authority by reminding those present that he was constantly asked by his superiors. And after all of this, while Brabantio insisted that Othello tell his stories to him and his daughter, Othello explains that a key motivator was that Desdemona would “with a greedy ear / Devour up my discourse” (1.3.170-71). Ultimately, as with any market of producers and consumers, Othello’s incentive to produce his language was the consumption demand.

Othello’s stories are both real and mythical. When Othello speaks of the “battles, sieges, and fortunes / That I have passed” (1.3.51-52), there is no indication that these experiences would necessarily be any different from those Venetians would experience. This is a time of constant war and struggle in Italy both internally among the different city-states and externally with invading French, German, Spanish, and Turk. Battles, sieges, and the fortunes therein are just like those the Venetians would have experienced, and are very real. But Othello quickly deviates from these commonplace stories and

dives deep into the world of the exotic and the supernatural. His stories enter into the strangeness “of Cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders” (1.3.164-66). These phenomena are beyond the Venetian experience and highlight how much more of the world Othello has experienced—or at least the different parts of the world he had known.

This is also a strange linguistic move for Othello as he uses elevated diction to describe these exotic things, diction not normally associated with his status as an intellectually-lacking *other*, and he assumes his educated audience is not familiar with these terms. This serves two functions. (1) By using the educated, Latinate words to describe his exotic encounters, Othello distances himself from that other world, for DeForest claims, “Latinate words raise walls” (393). Thus, Othello can wield his *otherness* without touching it too closely, balancing the wildness of being *other* with the tamed Latinate diction. (2) Using these Latinate words gives him more power in the linguistic market as he is speaking to senators. Those familiar with the words he uses would find Othello redundant; he defines the Latinate words he uses. The word *cannibal* is a Spanish derivative with possible roots in the Italian word *carne* for *meat* and further roots in the Latin *carnis* (OED cannibal). This word alone would be sufficient to describe the people Othello refers to, and yet he chooses to immediately provide a simpler description of the same group, saying, “that each other eat” just in case his audience was unfamiliar with the term. Making this move, Othello merges his *otherness* with his identity as a Venetian general to make himself seem more dominant. Not only does he

have the appeal of exoticism and experiences beyond the Venetians, but he also has the ability to use words that, he assumes, is beyond them.

He does this again when he talks of the “anthropophagi” on the next line. Again repetitive, this Greek word literally means “people-eater” and refers to a specific class of cannibals described by the Greek historian Herodotus as having no heads and faces on their **torsos**. Othello takes a step further by using this word, as it is much more obscure and syllabically longer, to assert his linguistic mastery. This strange reference also proves his education and his ability to describe the world whether or not he actually encountered these creatures. Again assuming his audience is unfamiliar with the complicated term, he supplies a description by following with “men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders” (1.3.165-66). While Othello embraces his *otherness* as an advantageous part of his identity, he does so in a remote way. By crafting his exotic examples in this way, Othello challenges the senators’ own capacity for the language as well as their worldly experiences compared to the incredible stories Othello tells.

If this was not enough to charm or insult the court, Othello shows how his *otherness* is the very thing that makes him a man for Desdemona. As Desdemona heard the stories and cried in pity for him, Othello tells the court, “She wish’d she had not heard it, yet she wish’d / That heaven had made her such a man” (1.3.183-84). These stories Othello tells of the land of the *other*, whether true or invented, are the very thing that makes Othello a unique man in Desdemona’s eyes. By his suffering in his dramatic, monster-infested youth, Desdemona seems to think that heaven gave him such trials to shape him into the man he is. She could only hope for a Venetian as masculine-charged

by tales of grandeur as Othello is. Diluting this sentence, Othello argues that his *otherness* is what makes him a man.

4.2.1 Is Othello the sum total of performances or is there an essential underlying self?

What is it that makes Othello a man? Is it his stories—his words and not his deeds? Do words have a greater influence on one's identity than action or an internal self does? Let us take a moment to consider the relationship of language to performance, and performance to the identity of the speaker. According to Irving Goffman, "A 'performance' may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (8), and thus it is not a far logical leap to argue that language is a performance that we enact every time we open our mouths. Linguistic performance is affected by the place we are speaking, to whom we are speaking, and the situation in which we speak. In her study of Jane Austen's novels, DeForest expresses the impact of language performance on the identity of the speakers, saying, "With Austen's judicious blending of Latinate and Germanic words, her characters reveal who they are" (390). There is a ring of a true identity here with DeForest's statement, for in the act of speech a revealing element of identity emerges. Language is not the character's identity in its entirety but a character's employment of language is a gateway into their identity.

Because language is a performance I find it necessary to bring in the voices of two performance theorists. In brief, Judith Butler argues that all aspects of one's

identity—race, gender, sexuality—are performed. The way in which one acts, speaks, and reacts in their environments is the conception and actualization of the self. Butler argues that the performance is what composes the self while Irving Goffman discusses performance as an expression of the self constantly affected by those for whom you are performing. Even though the performance is dynamic according to the environment, Goffman argues contrary to Butler that the self exists prior to the performance and is only expressed in performance.

4.2.2 The Question of Essentialism

One of the major differences between Goffman's perspective on performing the self and Butler's perspective is one of essentialism. Goffman seems to believe that each person has within them an essential self that they show mere glimpses of through their interactions in each new situation and to various actors they come across. "At one extreme," Goffman argues, "we find that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he *stages* is the real reality" (Goffman 10). Judith Butler would argue that the performance is the identity itself, whereas Goffman claims that the true identity lies underneath and can be lost in the impression that is staged. It is an interesting tension to explore, since "being taken in by his own act" in Goffman's eyes is a dangerous loss of identity whereas in Butler's eyes it is an affirmation of that identity. Goffman cautions, therefore, that one can get so caught up in their various performances that they can lose sight of this *real* self inside them and mistake their performance—their portrayal of who they are—as the real self when it is

not (Goffman 9). Butler, on the other hand, argues that there is no essential *real* self underneath the performance but on the contrary the performance *is* the real self. What are we but the sum of our performances?

Othello begins to lose control of himself and his performances as Iago fills his ears with manipulative suspicions: that Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio. At this point, Othello is unwilling to accept the accusation and dismisses any possibility of jealousy as irrational. I have transcribed this monologue with all words that count for the Latinate score underlined. Words of Latin origin are colored purple, words of French origin are colored red, and there are no words of Greek origin in this monologue:

Think'st thou I'd make a lie of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No; to be once in
doubt
Is once to be resolved: exchange me for
a goat,
When I shall turn the business of my
soul
To such exsufflicate and blown surmises,
Matching thy inference. 'Tis not to make
me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves
company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays and dances
well;

Where virtue is, these are more virtuous:
Nor from mine own weak merits will I
draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes, and chose me. No,
Iago;
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt,
prove;
And on the proof, there is no more but
this,—
Away at once with love or jealousy!
(Shakespeare 3.3. 208-23)

One needs only to see how often the words “jealous” and “doubt” occur to see that Othello protests too much. In regards to decreasing Latinate levels DeForest explains, “Latinate levels go down when a character is under stress [...] This is a short-term effect, but the drop can be sustained over long periods, when a character is under prolonged

emotional stress” (395). At 18%, this is Othello’s second lowest monologue in Latinate density as he is under stress, and those words that are Latinate refer either to suspicion, jealousy, and doubt or to virtue and merits as Othello is trying to figure out if Desdemona is faithful to him or if she is cheating on him. Not quite his lowest point—the moment after he kills Desdemona and is discovered Othello has a monologue at 10%—this moment is a turning point for both his language and his faith in Desdemona to deteriorate.

Despite his poor performance of this monologue to Iago, though, it is here that Othello declares his creed of justice: “I’ll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove; / And on the proof, there is no more but this,—” (Shakespeare 3.3.221-23). Even though he is already beginning to fall apart with his language and his rhetoric, he still retains his sense of justice which ennobles him more than his words.

What does this all mean for Othello? If we take Butler’s approach, then the essence of Othello is simply his various interactions with other actors in the play. By acting eloquent and authoritative before the court, Othello *is* an eloquent and authoritative person. By acting like an uncontrolled emotional animal and jealous husband before Iago, that in effect shows who Othello is as well. However, if we take Goffman’s stance, Othello is more than his captivating speeches and his tragic descent. What, then, is this essential self of Othello and why is it important? I believe that a piece of Othello’s essential self lies within his justice code. This formula is an essential part of Othello’s character and indeed is a way in which he performs his self. How Othello handles his own case before the Senators follows this code, how he deals with Cassio’s drunken offence follows this code, and his original approach to Desdemona being

accused of having an affair also follows this code. Elements of this justice are neither exclusively Occident nor exclusively Orient and this code seems unaffected by the internal split of Othello's self.

Yet Othello manages to lose his code. The very thing that sustains Othello's identity is compromised. Iago manages to manipulate Othello to the point of reversing the code of justice. He creates a space of vulnerability where Othello no longer trusts proof, instead trusting only the suspicion of his wife's infidelity, where suspicion itself is enough to sustain Othello's jealousy. In the end, Othello murdering Desdemona is done against Othello's essential code of justice and he must confront this self-betraying reality. A part of him is lost and Othello has precious few moments left in the play to find redemption, which we will see in his final monologue.

4.3.1 The Fall

Remarkably as we see Othello's code of justice and his integrity deteriorate, we see a similar fall in his linguistic capacity. I have already discussed the many layers that complicate Othello's identity and how those layers establish a shaky level of expectation projected onto the Moor. Ultimately, though, each of these layers that compose Othello's multi-faceted self fall on one side or the other of a clear identity division line: Othello as an Other from an African country (Orient), base and unaccustomed to Western life, and Othello as a Venetian general and elegant Western Us. Throughout the play, Othello is able to balance these two halves of his self. He keeps a Western discourse and etiquette and judicial system when defending himself before the senate while wielding his Orient

side of mythic stories and mysterious origin to impress them. In his deterioration he loses control of this balance near the end of the play. He can no longer hold the Western and Oriental sides of him in harmony and must make a crucial decision to eliminate one, the other, or both.

As Othello's code deteriorates so does his language, until finally he reaches the Latinate nadir of any character and performs a distressed monologue at 10% Latinate diction. Here, Othello has just been caught murdering his wife and is so overwhelmed with emotion he threatens to kill himself. This is the lowest point of the play, morally and linguistically, and the most intense in the play's emotion and action:

Behold, I have a weapon;
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh: I have seen the
day,
That, with this little arm and this good
sword,
I have made my way through more
impediments
Than twenty times your stop: but, O vain
boast!
Who can control his fate? 'tis not so now.
Be not afraid, though you do see me
weapon'd;
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.
Do you go back dismay'd? 'tis a lost fear;
Man but a rush against Othello's breast,
And he retires. Where should Othello
go?

Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-
starr'd wench!
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet
at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from
heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold,
my girl!
Even like thy chastity. O cursed slave!
Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly
sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in
sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid
fire!
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!
Oh! Oh! Oh!
(Shakespeare 5.2.310-32)

As DeForest predicts, great stress levels reduces Othello's Latinate diction. Words that do factor into his Latinate density include words of defeat and struggle: *soldier, impediments, stop, vain control, fate*. Most clauses are either baffled questions or wild exclamations. Linguistically, morally, and emotionally Othello has lost control and asks about himself, "Who can control his fate?" (Shakespeare 5.2.316). Jealousy and Iago's manipulation sent Othello into confusion and helplessness.

The very idea of language to Othello has become corrupted. Even though he still speaks as a soldier and still claims that his life experiences far exceed that of his fellow Venetians—"I have made my way through more impediments / than twenty times your stop" (Shakespeare 5.2.314-15)—his confidence in what those experiences have made him wavers. To him, everything he has said becomes a "Vain boast" and the stories that once captivated the hearts of Brabantio and Desdemona are now nothing more than bygone pride and exotic tales (Shakespeare 5.2.315).

Here Othello begins to speak of himself in the third-person, distancing a part of his self from the person that deteriorated and committed murder. He oscillates from referring to himself as "Othello" and "he" to self-referencing "I" and "me" signaling the breakdown of his grasp on identity. In one moment he says, "Where should Othello go?" and in the next he owns himself saying, "This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven" (Shakespeare 5.2.322, 325). He does not intend to distance himself from his crimes, as he does call for his own punishment in the first-person: "Whip me, ye devils!" and "Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur! / Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!" (Shakespeare 5.2.328, 330-31). His inability to retain a stable reference

between third- and first-person shows he has fully lost the balance between his opposing selves.

After this monologue several characters enter the bedroom all at once for the final moments of the play. Lodovico, a high-ranking Venetian among them, asks where Othello is and the Moor responds, “There’s he that was Othello. Here I am.” Othello answers with an *I* that comes out of the body. While he still responds in the first-person, it is only after he identifies himself in the third-person. More importantly, he uses the word *was*, as if the Othello we have come to know throughout the play is a person of the past. Othello is now no more.

4.3.2 Othello’s Final Monologue

Is Othello lost in that moment? Is this man of a complicated and dynamic self, both externally and internally, now gone with his declaration? Has the divide in his identity caused him to break? In his first defense, Othello finds harmony with these opposing identities, balancing the exotic, physical, and emotional side of him with his militaristic, eloquent, and intelligent side. In the scene before the court in Act 1 Scene 3, Othello balances his African *other* side with his Venetian general side. By the final scene in Act 5 Scene 2, after his lowest point, he may have severed his *other* side from his Venetian side. Despite this break, in his last moments, he delivers a final defense where he regains a glimmer of redemption:

Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know't.
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus.
(Shakespeare 5.2.397-417)

Remarkably, juxtaposed against the high tension and drama of his monologue moments before, Othello begins his last monologue with the word *soft*. It is a request for his witnesses for calm, slow, level-headed discussion. It is a realization. A settling. From this request to bring down the tension of the play Othello then asks, “a word or two before you go” (Shakespeare 5.2.397). After intense action influenced by corrupted emotion, Othello returns to a power he possessed at the beginning of the play: the power of words. Through language, he begins the process of redemption. Opening with these words, Othello comes back to himself long enough to explain what tragedy has come.

At the beginning of the play, Othello must defend himself on a domestic matter—that of his marriage to Desdemona—before the Duke and the senators in a public court. By the end of the play Othello finds himself in a tragically reversed situation where he

must defend himself on a public matter—that of murdering Desdemona—before the Duke and the senators in his private bedroom. In both of these defenses, Othello *others* himself, calling to attention his own differences from the Venetians. Where he used this *other* to his advantage in the first defense Othello, employing the exotic elements of his *otherness* to seduce both the court and Desdemona, by the end of the play Othello compares himself to a “base Indian” and a “malignant Turk” and confesses that his own weaknesses were products of such *otherness* (Shakespeare 5.2.408, 414).

As he did before, Othello begins his defense by calling attention to his duty to Venice. He reminds his audience, “I have done the state some service, and they know’t” (5.2.138). This allows him to begin this speech as a Venetian general occupying his main identity at the time. Instead of beginning his final defense by calling attention to his special background, he urges his audience to think of him as an honorable and achieved general, one with a strong creed for action against injustice which precedes either of his other identities as *other* or Venetian, and thus asks for their sympathy. Where in the first defense Othello accounted the strange, unnatural, and exotic encounters as things he witnessed but never partook in, here Othello directly compares himself to the examples he gives. He compares his murder to the foolish act “of one whose hand, / Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe” (5.2.405-07), the operative word here being “base” as that speaks to the assumption that these Indians are dull, simple, and incapable of complex thought and understanding value. Even his emotions are *othered* when he says he is like one whose “subdued eyes [...] Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees / Their medicinal gum” (5.2.407, 409-10). Though not as exotic as the

Anthropophagi, the Arabian trees are still different from Venetian culture and their sap holds strange medicinal property that would be enchanting to westerners.

He also emphasizes the nature of linguistic discourse in both defenses. Where he constantly reinforces the role of the auditor in his speech and the hints he took to continue speaking from his auditors in his first defense, by the end Othello no longer can be the storyteller and urges the tradition to be passed down to those witnessing his murder and suicide, asking them to speak of the true Othello and not the monster he became. In the beginning Othello embraced the *other* inside him as a positive force, but in his final separation Othello clearly recognizes the presence of the *other* within him and judges it, as those around him influence him to do, as the negative force responsible for tragedy. Othello divides himself into two persons, the honorable Venetian general from the “Turkish dog” (5.2.14), and decides only to identify with the Venetian one. He refers to his Venetian *us* side in the first person and deictically distances himself from his inferior side by referring to it in the third person. In his attempt to assimilate with the Venetians, Othello tragically divides a part of himself, bastardizes it, and loses it. Unfortunately this African/Turkish/dog identity is a major part of who he is. Is there nothing left to redeem after Othello smites it?

Othello seems to blame his *other* identity for his murder. Is that evidence that his *other* side caused his code to corrupt? He explains that he was “one that loved not wisely but too well” (5.2.403). This aligns with the Orientalist argument that the *other* is considered to be more ruled by passion and extreme emotions rather than logic and wisdom. That Othello loved “too well” shows that he had no restraints on him that would

have been expected of a proper Venetian citizen of the time. His emotions blinded him, he admits with his “subdued eyes” (5.2.407). *Others* are also easily tricked and puzzled, being unaccustomed to complex society and slower in mind, and Othello claims that he was not jealous but “perplex’d in the extreme” (5.2.405). By admitting to being played by Iago and confessing his own inability to sort out the web of manipulation he was trapped in, Othello follows the expectations for an *other* which leads to his deterioration. To what extent can Othello be blamed for murder, blamed for being *other*, or blamed for being manipulated? In his eyes, he does not wish for people to make excuses for his behavior and his actions. Before he makes his final act, he instructs his audience at the end, “Speak of me as I am, nothing extenuate” (Shakespeare 5.2.401). He recognizes the gravity of what has happened and does not want to dismiss that, expressing it in a Latinate word: extenuate. To extenuate is “to lessen in degree; to weaken the force of, mitigate” (OED extenuate). Othello is not asking for anyone to cut him slack for any reason, whether because he is an *other* or because he was manipulated. He wishes for his audience to recognize his actions. What Othello asks for in the end is true, honest sympathy for who he really is and what he has done without turning a blind eye to any detail.

And we leave the play sympathetic for him.

4.4.1 Sympathy for Othello

If Othello is ironized and has such a fantastic fall from a noble and respectable character to a jealous blind murderer, why do we have sympathy for him? Where does this sympathy come from? Sympathy can be explained in two ways. One is the empathy

we can have for someone in feeling their pain or understating their bad fortune and wishing them the best given the bad situation they have been thrown into. The other form of sympathy is our ability to identify with the person, even if at the smallest level, and see how we are similar to them. It is this second form of sympathy that Othello invokes so acutely in us. We are all capable to some degree of falling in the same way Othello does and it is this quiet knowing within us that draws us into him.

Do we sympathize with what Othello is, or what he invents himself to be? After seeing Othello fall to pieces, become a jealous monster who plans and executes murder against an innocent and loyal wife, does something happen in Othello's final minutes that redeems him, that calls for our sympathy? I would argue that there is a moment of catharsis for Othello and for the audience at his last, where he sees the error of his ways, the deception that he was victim to, and makes a judgment that aligns with the true nature of who he was. Othello does not commit suicide out of fear or grief but as an act that reaffirms the essential self I believe exists within him, that of a just and noble man. Had he simply been carried off to jail to serve for his murder, we would leave the theater with a very different idea of who Othello is. But because he comes back to himself, completing the circle that began at the beginning of the play, and on the proof of his fall and his evil deed, Othello sees that "there is no more but this,—” (Shakespeare 3.3.22), and he casts his judgment to commit suicide. He kills himself in words first, separating his *other* self into the third-person and in his first-person Venetian declares, "I took by the throat the circumcised dog, / And smote him, thus” (Shakespeare 5.2.416-17). His commitment to the speech act is so intense it authenticates himself. He sees the villain in

him and extinguishes him, the consequence being the physical death of the whole person.

At the very end, at his lowest point, he is able to see how Iago bastardized his code.

Othello can redeem himself, reclaim his justice, and dies with that reclamation.

Those who witness Othello's final act of justice approve it. Shakespeare encodes their endorsement on the stage through the reactions of minor characters. Both sides of Othello are neatly declared by Lodovico and Graziano, high-ranking Venetian and kinsman to Brabantio who enter the room in time to see the end. Lodovico exclaims at the moment of Othello stabbing himself, "O bloody period!" (Shakespeare 5.2.418), an affirmation of the physical violence, a bloody moment of the *other*. But it is not only a bloody, chaotic action, for Graziano then cries, "All that is spoke is marred" (Shakespeare 5.2.419). These two lines juxtapose in punctuation as well, with the emotional exclamation point of Lodovico's line against Graziano's somber period. Graziano endorses some value that existed with Othello, value that was spoken. Does he mean to say that the verbal act of killing the murderous dog in Othello was enough and that the physical suicide was unnecessary? Or does he recognize the tragic value of Othello's final act of justice against himself and find it all marred in the corruption of murder and death? It is a quiet moment where they both see the two halves Othello struggles with and how those two halves ended up destroying each other. It is a shocking moment when the tensions of the entire play all come together into a final culmination of Othello's internal and external identities, a synthesis of who he is, an actualization of his justice code after a severe corruption. It is a somber moment where Othello's death can be seen as a successful, tragic revival of his truer self.

4.4.2 “Speak of me as I am”: Who is this I?

This begs the question, who is Othello truly? In many ways this thesis has been a pursuit in finding who this true Othello really is. As he is divided in an Orient-Occident dichotomy, it is hard to tell what part of himself he wants to be immortalized in story. When he says this at the end, what Othello are we likely to remember and speak of? One who has loved not wisely but too well, the Oriental Othello? Or the “I” who took the circumcised dog and smote him thus? Writer and broadcaster Germaine Greer tells David Harewood in his documentary, “Everything in *Othello* depends on Othello. Who is Othello? You never get a solid account of who Othello is.” Part of Shakespeare’s genius of *Othello* is just that—Othello is an incredibly complex and dynamic character lacking a solid foundation upon which he can stand. Not only does this make him an exciting and engaging character, but one relatable with real-world significance.

It was jealousy that threw Othello’s split selves into disharmony. Iago’s craft, whether he knew it or not, was systematically exploiting one side of Othello until he lost balance. The fact that Iago exploited the emotional side, the side that “loved not wisely, but too well” (Shakespeare 5.2.404), is probably incidental. Othello could have just as destructively lost balance if his Venetian side was exploited into a cold, calculating, emotionless military man. It’s not that one side of Othello is evil. Instead the disharmony that he falls into makes him a monster. In the end they do not celebrate a Venetian man slaying a Turk/*other*. Othello’s Venetian half takes the Turkish *other* and, like a captain

with his ship, both halves go down in preservation of an essential, just self that transcends his split selves.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 Beyond *Othello*

In all of us there is something of an Othello. Othello can help inform the manipulated and misdirected or the foreigner facing the enormous weight of expectation to be both who you were in your home country and who you must be in this foreign country. Even as performers of a language on a daily basis, Othello has something to offer us. Our language competence is the capital by which our social worth is measured. Others judge us by our speech, using our linguistic performance as a measure of our identity.

All of us must negotiate and articulate our identities through our language in every interaction we have. While part of this negotiation involves the often intuitive use of Latinate words in our diction, Latinate density is only one factor among several variables and nuances of language performance. This makes Latinate density a tricky tool to use because we must be aware of these other factors at play before we can properly analyze speech. Mary DeForest comes to the same conclusion in her study of Austen's work: "Human beings are still necessary as readers to distinguish Austen's monsters from her most attractive characters" (400). While we can use machines and statistics to

calculate Latinate densities, the numbers do not speak for themselves and we must still interpret the meaning behind them. The same holds true for our language performance in life: we must respond to the cultural and environmental factors present in each performance encounter. These factors include expectation, levels of intimacy, the domain in which you speak—essentially the way in which your auditors will consume your discourse in the each linguistic market. While native speakers might intuitively know what the marketplace values are in each situation, non-native speakers must learn these values.

Each situation brings its own conditions that collocutors must respond to, and with Latinate density being only a small variable in each speaker's performance, I return to an earlier question: can we objectively measure how eloquently a person speaks? How appropriately a person speaks in each context? Ultimately, after my research, I am inclined to answer no. An objective measure of speech is devoid of the qualitative assessments each human being makes in the linguistic market and while there are agreed values, these values must always be determined with respect to the peculiarities of the situation—there is no standard measure of linguistic performance.

5.2 Expectations with Speaking a Foreign Language

My interest in expectation and performance in language stems from my own experiences during my semester abroad in Japan. In preparation for my trip, I spent three years teaching myself Japanese with several language supplements, including Rosetta Stone®. In the semester before I left for Japan, I spent time learning from my wonderful

tutor Mrs. Yuki Young. When I was in Japan I took a couple language classes, one focused on speaking and another focused on reading and writing kanji (borrowed and modified Chinese characters). The real learning process began when I was immersed in the country and surrounded by the language wherever I went.

But my language skills were still pretty low. Coming from a university in America where I can articulate myself at a high level, able to express my political opinions, defend my beliefs, and discuss rhetorical implications in a text, it was quite difficult to be in a country where the extent to which I could express myself was in what flavor of ice cream I preferred. But slowly my Japanese slowly improved.

One day after receiving the results to a test, my Japanese teacher made a point to tell me how impressed she was with my progress. Feeling a bit proud of myself, I returned home that night and worked on my homework when my host mom looked over my shoulder and began praising me for how much kanji I knew. It was almost too much, with my teacher and then my host mom going on about how good my language skills were. I even received comments for how impressive Japanese mastery was from my Japanese friends, the bus driver, the man selling train tickets at the booth, and even the convenience store clerk. Curious to see just how far I really came, I decided to check what my level really was. I had a kanji dictionary organized by grade and after a quick review I discovered I had attained the level of a second-grader.

Suddenly I was not so proud of my Japanese skills. All this time I was walking around talking to people at the level of a second-grader, a small child. And yet they were praising my skills. Why praise a second-grade level of speaking? We would not likely

compliment a foreigner in America if they spoke English at that level. This is when I began seriously questioning the relationship of expectation and judgment. I was judged well despite my low level, and it was because they had low expectations for me to speak Japanese. In Japan they believe their language is one of the hardest to learn—a myth in my opinion—and have no expectation for a foreigner of any kind to speak more than a couple words in Japanese. The mere fact that I could ask for things in complete sentences at the train station or the convenience store was already impressive given their standard.

Returning to my thought experiment in §3.1.2, what would my own scores look like on the 1 through 10 scale of language expectation and performance? Even if my expectation in America to speak English is a 7, and my expectation to speak English as an English major in university is an 8 due to more training in the finer points of grammar and vocabulary, my actual margin for speaking English is pretty low. Let's say for argument's sake that I can perform English at the level expected of me in a university: an 8. That means that outside of the university people might view me with a positive margin of 1. What if I was speaking English at a 4—the general level of a second-grader? Then people would judge me at a negative margin: -3. This is quite a significant drop. So why were the Japanese not judging me at a -3? Because my expectation to speak Japanese was basically a 1. So instead of criticizing my low skill in Japanese, they were praising me for my positive margin of 3.

Why? Were the Japanese being racist towards me by having such low expectations? Originally, my research began telling me that they were. Whether or not their assumptions were racists, they had exposed the *other* in me as foreigner in Japan.

Looking at Othello, it appeared that all the reasons for his low expectation were born from racism. Othello as an *other* was not expected to speak well because he was not European and thus assumed to be less intelligent. But was this really the case in Japan? Maybe, but I honestly do not believe so, and again I turn to Said to explain why.

5.3 Reversing Orientalism

It appears to me that Said's system is *reversible*. Where Othello was treated with low expectation for being an *other* in Venice as a result of racism, perhaps I was treated with a low expectation for being an *other* in Japan as a result of grace—if still condescending grace. As an American, I had no reason to speak Japanese and they recognized that. The mere fact that I was trying was enough to please them. They were giving me the benefit of a low expectation because they recognized the effort and will I was putting into my language learning. At the same time, I realized that by reaching out to them and trying to speak to them in their own language, I was dignifying them. It was a gesture where I said to them they were worth the effort and the time to listen to, to speak with.

Japan does not represent the attitudes of every country, however. Generally, trying to speak French, even if you are fluent, is often taken as an offense of the language rather than dignifying it. The French are much more willing to speak English to Americans than let them try and butcher their own language. Perhaps this is an attitude of the colonial—that France had significant colonial power and therefore are more guarded about the integrity of their language, similar to how Americans feel about natives

butchering English. Expectation of language is not a simple binary between those who are delighted to see you attempting their language and those who demand you speak it perfectly.

In America, we do not often find these dignities or graces in respects to foreigners and English. I think because America is in a place of world power, like France, we do not feel the need to learn other languages in order to keep our place in the world, whether politically or individually. Americans are therefore more likely to learn a foreign language out of desire whereas people from other countries are more likely to learn English out of necessity. This disparity can lead to unsympathetic conceptions of what it means to be a foreigner.

This, I believe, is how we treat foreigners in America. Instead of racism, for it is not based on race, ethnicity, or national identity, it is discrimination based on language. Regardless of where a person comes from, if they do not speak English at the expected level in America they are subject to prejudice. It is not how we ought to treat them, and perhaps my research and experiences can help shed light on the problem enough for us to begin to change.

This is how the implications of Said's argument is reversible: the negative assumptions about the *other* in Orientalism, while sometimes harmful, can sometimes be beneficial. In a nuanced form of Orientalism, the *other* might not be assumed to be unintelligent and uneducated, but rather not proficient in the language of the *us*. That is to say, while a Hindi person can be both intelligent and uneducated, assuming that they are also fluent in English is more harmful than good. On the flip side, assuming that they are

not English speakers and then discovering that they either are or are not grants them the grace they deserve.

While I say this, though, I am still not free from the issue. Even after I returned from Japan I was a perpetrator of languageism. I went to an Asian counter-service restaurant and gave my order to the server. She then asked me a question in broken English and in a thick accent which I did not understand. I asked her to repeat herself, but, still not understanding, I just gave her my order again and moved on. Behind me, my friend Nick came up chewing on a wonton saying, “Dude, she was asking you if you wanted a free sample.”

Not only was I not willing to give her the time and patience to try to understand her, but she was offering me free food. She was trying to give me something and I did not have the grace to listen whereas Nick (who only speaks English and has never gone out of the country) did have the grace. Had I expected her to speak more clearly and thus did not spend time to understand her based on her negative margin? Was Nick approaching her with a lower expectation and therefore more willing to appreciate her attempt at communication? I’m not sure, but in that moment he treated her with more patience and respect than I did probably because I was too caught up in getting my order in and then going about my busy day. The opportunity for discrimination or grace presents itself in places we do not expect. Even after doing this thesis project I surprise myself to find moments when these issues are most applicable and when I still ignore them. Without ever researching these issues, Nick’s mindfulness and lack of a rush put him in a better place to handle them.

The reversibility of Said's Orientalism theory is a topic for further research and discussion which I may choose to pursue for future projects.

5.4 Rewriting my Identity and the Search for an Essential Self

While in Japan the struggle of performing my identity in a language I had not yet mastered was a constant source of excitement and frustration. Greater than race, religion, or nationality, I found that my ability to speak Japanese was either my greatest bridge to connect to the people there or my greatest barrier holding me back. In the moments of failure where my language skills were not sufficient to hold a conversation, I found that the hardest part was not being able to express myself or to understand the person I was speaking with expressing their own identity. Language works both ways with performed identity—I perform my identity while picking up on the ways in which they perform their identity. If they were using a colloquialism or telling a joke that I did not understand, they were performing a part of who they are that I was not able to comprehend.

Even in these moments of language failure, though, identity still shined through. Where language was lacking, gestures, smiles, and actions still perform the identity. Beneath these performances still are the motivations and reasons behind the performance which goes to the heart of essentialism.

I also do not believe that the Oriental divide needs to exist quite so distinctly as it does with Othello. While I came to Japan with an idea of what it means to be American and what it means to be Japanese, I do not believe the two have to be exclusive. For example, in America we tend to hug our friends a lot and shake hands with our associates,

but in Japan they are not as comfortable with physical contact and prefer bowing as a sign of friendship or respect. This does not mean that Americans are warmer than Japanese to their friends or to strangers, even though physical distance might make a Japanese person seem colder in American eyes. Instead I found Japanese people to be just as warm and friendly as Americans can be, just expressing it—performing it—in different ways that better adhere to their own social codes. Based on the culture I grew up with my preference is to hug my friends and shake hands with strangers. However, based on the social pressures of Japanese culture I had to learn a different approach to performing my affection and respect. While my more physical preference is a mark of being American, the value underneath of warmth and friendliness is not distinctly American or *us* but exists beyond the *us* and *other* divide.

Let me not devalue the significance of performances. The difference of Japanese and American physical contact is indeed a performance of their culture which says different things about their cultural identity. However, beneath the performance is something more universally human than cultural identity. I believe that those who experience being a stranger and a foreigner are put in positions where they might glean some of these human elements which run deeper than cultural differences. After studying Shakespeare's *Othello* it became apparent to me that we are not free from social pressures which dictate the way in which we perform ourselves. Othello acted in accordance with the social cues of Venice. However, the performed self is not the only identity we have.

5.5 Closing Remarks

If I am to conclude my thesis with one comment it is this: we are all subject to the discrimination of others based on expectation and language. No one is free of it, even if you do not leave the country. Every interaction you have involves the evaluation of language performance. The immigrant shoppers at a grocery store who hold up a line because a store clerk cannot understand their question, the Hindi professor who comes to speak at a university and is not perfectly understood because of his accent, the Spanish-speaking custodians who are ignored in the halls because the English-speaking students cannot speak with them, are all subjects of this discrimination.

In America we are comfortable with our global language, not faced with necessity to learn another language for success either at the individual or social level. Learning other languages is not seen as valuable in our American linguistic market as learning English might be in an Asian or European country. Perhaps Said would say that the political, economic, and cultural power of English-speaking countries enriches English with value in a global linguistic market. Because of American and British global power, other world nations are compelled to learn English to increase their own global capital. It is not a failure of the culture that causes this, but the state of the current global environment. While we as individuals are not capable of single-handedly changing the global linguistic market paradigm, understanding where these values are born might give us the ability to change the values.

Does this mean that the answer to the social justice issue raised here is encouraging more grace in individuals? I am not saying that we have an obligation to become masters of all languages and accents to solve this problem. Instead to the Jesuit

question, “How ought we to live?” or my variation on the question, “How ought we to treat others based on language?” I answer, “With grace.” We ought to live with grace enough to see a whole and just person beneath an Othello defeated by manipulation, with the same grace and patience I was shown from Japanese natives trying to understand my broken language.

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