



Coordenadoria
do Curso de Letras
Língua Inglesa e suas Literaturas



Universidade Federal
de São João del-Rei

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**MIRRORING NARRATIVES IN MULTIPLE LAYERS OF RACISM WITHIN
OTHELLO, A PLAY BY SHAKESPEARE, AND *NEW BOY*, A NOVEL BY
CHEVALIER**

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Dezembro de 2022**

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado à
Coordenadoria do Curso de Graduação em Letras, da
Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei, como
requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Licenciado
em Letras – Língua Inglesa e suas Literaturas.

Orientadora: Miriam de Paiva Vieira

**São João del-Rei
Dezembro de 2022**

*To my parents, for raising me to believe that I
could achieve anything, and to Jamie, for
making everything possible.*

*For just a skyline pigeon
Dreaming of the open
Waiting for the day
He can spread his wings
And fly away again
(Elton John)*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude and appreciation are extended to different people who have contributed to making this achievement possible.

To my grandparents, whose sacrifices as well as their strength and wisdom have taught me the importance of persevering, never giving up, and always expecting better days to come. With them, I have also learnt to have and never forget my faith. This faith was what sustained me this far.

To my parents, whose daily endeavours and obstacles have provided me with the best education they could afford, which has helped me enormously to get into a university, and for that, I will always be grateful. With my father, I have also learnt about the value of education and that, despite any circumstances, no one could ever take that from me. With my mother, I have found all the comfort in the world after facing challenging unexpected turn of events in my life, which has caused me to fall apart many times. Without this faith and support, as well as my belief that education transforms, I would not be here today.

To my brothers, who, despite uncountable fights, were always there to have my back, and to protect me somehow. Growing up with you was essential in order for me to learn with the differences and how important it is dialogue even in an argument. It is about respecting others' points of view, and this is a very important value, especially in the university, where you have contact with people from everywhere, who will also teach you a lot.

To my aunties, uncles, and cousins, who have made the journey lighter with memories and distractions. You helped me to hold it tighter, as family means everything.

To my mother-in-law and father-in-law, who believed in me even from being far away and whose advices were really important in my journey.

To my friends from university and school, who were supportive all the way and whose laughter and good moments I shared with them gave me a sense of belonging in this world.

To all my teachers, who were essential throughout this journey. You have inspired me and still do, contributing to making me a better human being and understanding the possibilities that lie within education. I would like to mention some teachers that were highly important in my journey, such as Professor Carolina, Professor Patrícia, Professor Fernanda, and Professor Marcos. And Professor Miriam, whose professionalism and personality has inspired and guided me through all these years in the university and has made me fall in love with literature even

more; without your guidance, support and belief, this project would not be able to leave the paper.

To the love of my life, the main reason why I fight. I dedicate this final project to you. Your love guided me through the darkest days, especially when I was about to fall apart. Your confidence and support have made me stronger and given me more reason to fight and to make our dreams become real, even when the distance and different circumstances seemed to hurt us. Thank you for waiting so patiently and sticking around when I was completely lost. Thank you for holding my hand every moment when I needed it the most. Thank you for making me feel embraced even when we were far. Thank you for loving me intensely in every aspect. And I love you and always will with the same intensity. And words will never be enough to express my gratitude and my love.

ABSTRACT

Over the centuries, societies have constantly tried to tell similar narratives differently, which have motivated them to adapt in order to attend different social and cultural transformations. To better illustrate these great transformations, it is pertinent to emphasise this idea in the field of literature. The play *Othello* (ca.1603) and the novel *New Boy* (2017) are products of different times and urges, bringing to light a common background to be analysed, which is the theme of racism, present at the core of both societies, and the theme of chauvinism, which is incurred by a racist framework established throughout the narratives. Both stories bring different motivations, influences, and historical landmarks, but they present a plot which is important to be considered, as it lets us know why these narratives are still common, although they were set 400 years apart. Under the light of intermedial studies, we establish a dialogue (BRUHN, 2013) as a means of understanding the similarities and differences between then and now (RICH, 1972; SCHWANEBECK, 2022), considering changes in the environment and different needs (BORTOLOTTI & HUTCHEON, 2007; CATTRYSSSE, 2018).

Keywords: Intermedial studies; Dialogism; *Othello*; *New Boy*; Racism.

RESUMO

Ao longo dos séculos, as sociedades têm constantemente tentado contar narrativas parecidas de formas diferentes, o que as motivou a se adaptarem, de modo a atender às diferentes transformações sociais e culturais. Para melhor ilustrar essas grandes transformações, é pertinente enfatizar essa ideia no campo da literatura. A peça *Othello* (ca. 1603) e o romance *New Boy* (2017) são produtos de épocas e necessidades distintas, trazendo à tona um pano de fundo comum a ser analisado, que é o tema do racismo, presente no cerne de ambas as sociedades, e o tema do chauvinismo, que é provocado por um padrão racista estabelecido ao longo das narrativas. Ambas as histórias trazem motivações, influências e marcos históricos diferentes, mas apresentam um enredo que é importante ser considerado, pois nos permite saber por quê essas narrativas ainda são comuns, embora estejam separadas por 400 anos de diferença entre si. À luz dos estudos intermidiáticos, estabelecemos um diálogo (BRUHN, 2013) como forma de compreender as semelhanças e diferenças entre o então e o agora (RICH, 1972; SCHWANEBECK, 2022), considerando as mudanças no ambiente e as diferentes necessidades (BORTOLOTTI & HUTCHEON, 2007; CATTRYSSSE, 2018).

Palavras-chave: Estudos da Intermidialidade; Dialogismo; *Othello*; *New Boy*; Racismo.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: DISSIMILAR ANGLES	9
1. MIRRORING <i>OTHELLO</i> INTO <i>NEW BOY</i>	12
1.1 <i>Othello</i> , by Shakespeare	12
1.2 <i>New Boy</i> , by Chevalier.....	16
1.3 Theoretical speculum.....	19
2 DIALOGISING <i>OTHELLO</i> AND <i>NEW BOY</i>.....	25
2.1 Opposite as magnets	25
2.2 Seeing through the outsider	28
2.3 Stereotypical reflection.....	34
2.3.1 Identity emulation	38
2.4 Domination mirroring the nuances of segregation	39
2.4.1 And its unravels.....	44
FINAL THOUGHTS.....	49
REFERENCES	52

INTRODUCTION: DISSIMILAR ANGLES

The play *Othello* (ca. 1603) and the novel *New Boy* (2017) are set in different times and contexts. Although separated by a thin line, they share and mirror common societal issues. In the play, Othello and Desdemona are the self of the deployment within the narrative, though they both might share different selves throughout different times and contexts. Yet, their narrative is interrelated, as one act is the reflection of a chain of actions that occurs. Without Othello, there is not a self of Desdemona for us to investigate, and vice-versa. They are who they are because of the choices they made. In the novel, Osei and Dee are as opposites as magnets, attracting each other. In this sense, one may say that Osei and Dee's narrative is a love story of opposites, but not a trivial one. Their plot triggers a whirlwind of incidents, which is accentuated by the reaction of their surroundings, overly provoked by their unexpected attitudes which may or may not lack certain beliefs mirroring society in that time, making this narrative even more tragic. Understanding their narrative means putting into light questionable circumstances that have been discussed and portrayed by many authors in the past. In this regard, it is possible to presume that understanding Osei and Dee's thread may also help readers to understand the common grounds of this relationship in relation to Othello and Desdemona's dynamics.

Ian Smith (2013) suggests that responsible scholars working in a twenty-first-century world should make our mission and disciplinary endeavours to suggest ways of rethinking and improving our collective responsibility of living together in a plural society that lives up to the figure of Shakespeare, "who already unites us in a broad collaborative scholarly endeavour" (SMITH, 2013, p. 24), while understanding, talking and recognising the barriers that divide us. Thus, this Course Final Paper aims to establish a dialogue between *Othello* (ca. 1603), a play by William Shakespeare, and *New Boy* (2017), a novel by Tracy Chevalier. By threading this dialogue, it is this work's intention to explore how the adaptation in question is revised in the 21st century, under the light of intermedial studies.

The play *Othello* and the novel *New Boy* are products of different times and urges; however, both also bring to light a common background to be analysed, which is the racism that lies in the heart of both societies, and the thematic of chauvinism, which is a framework incurred by the racism presented inside the narratives. It should be noted that, according to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2007, p. 180), "the term [race] implies that the

mental and moral behaviour of human beings, as well as individual personality, ideas and capacities, can be related to racial origin and that knowledge of that origin provides a satisfactory account of the behaviour.” The author traces the rise of the idea of race back to colonialism when there was a necessity to “establish a dominance over subject peoples and hence justify the imperial enterprise” (ASHCROFT et al, 2007, p. 180-181), which helped European countries to conceive the belief of human variation, also mentioned by the author, and superiority. However, Ashcroft (2007) mentions that the term racism was first coined in the late 1600s by different authors not as a product of race, but as an underlying desire to categorise physical appearance in a set way, especially in terms of colour difference, which would directly interfere on the psychological or intellectual capacities of human beings. The author Ayanna Thompson (2021) also discusses that, although race was a modern concept developed during the Enlightenment and that this concept was a modern phenomenon, as commented by many authors, the way different poets and authors characterised different peoples were reflecting and shaping English ideas about race, “creating new concepts, stereotypes, and visions for race” (p. 6)- even though this concept was not used at the time. Thus, to Thompson (2021), race is a fiction, as it is “constructed by a social process that one might call race-making” (p. 7). Like Ashcroft et al (2007), Thompson (2021), departing from E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, also understands that racism produces race as a concept, bearing in mind that racism is a social practice used to ensure unequal distribution of goods, wealth, power, rights, etc, through the race concept. Thus, racism may be understood as part of the tentative to subjugate others by labelling people according to their looks, what enables the apprehension of how certain events happened and favoured some in relation to others, and how this subjugation contributes to the understanding of the roots of a society. Meanwhile, according to the Oxford dictionary, male sexism refers to “the belief held by some men that men are more important, more intelligent or better than women” (n.p.). This term is very important for us to understand how the world operates and why certain beliefs are still prominent nowadays in terms of why women are underestimated and subjugated. Thus, these terms will be referred to understand how literature mirrors these patterns in society.

In spite of the fact that Martin Orkin (1987) argues that Shakespeare appears to be concerned about separating his hero from the ideas of race attached to his colour, it is important to emphasise that *Othello's* play is very much impacted by these ideas. The necessity of analysing them can be justified by the fact that, in Shakespeare's time, the concept of race was

present, racialised epistemologies existed and were employed and deployed, and that Shakespeare engages in both the symbolic and materialistic elements related to “race-making”, thus, that “Shakespeare and race are coeval; they grew up as contemporaries” (THOMPSON, 2021, p. 3), considering that

the world in which Shakespeare was living, observing, and creating was an imperial one: one in which European countries, including England, were not only exploring parts of the world that were new to them, but also creating exploitative systems that worked to diversify and bolster their economies at the expense of others. (THOMPSON, 2021, p. 5)

Thus, we aim to analyse these ideas and its reflections in our contemporaneity.

According to Kim F. Hall (2003, p. 358), questions related to colour address “fears of the Western driven by the blackness”, in ways that make the Moor – which is exactly how Venetian society names Othello – connected to the figure of the Other¹. This Other evokes everything that is different to Christian Europe, whether it is an “alien” or a “foreigner”, delineating the geographic and religious distinctions between them (HALL, 2003). Although the plots present different motivations and are influenced by different historical landmarks, they still have the same intentions, which are to explore the vulnerability of those who do not feel a sense of belonging and are always assured by those who surround them that they are outsiders. Therefore, to establish an intermedial dialogue between the play *Othello* and the novel *New Boy* as means of understanding the similarities and differences between the play and this novel, taking into account its unravels, we will rely on Jørgen Bruhn (2013). To understand racism and chauvinism inside both narratives, looking back to the past in order to comprehend the future’s unfoldings, the novel *New Boy* will be analysed in the light of Adrienne Rich (1972) and Wieland Schwanebeck (2022). Finally, the ideas of Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon (2007) and Patrick Cattrysse (2018) will also be explored in an effort to acknowledge society's needs to adapt the same narrative throughout time. But first we will present the two counterpart literary objects.

¹ According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2007), this concept was used by different authors throughout history and it mainly refers to “anyone who is separate from one’s self” (p. 154), as a means of establishing the separation between the coloniser and the colonised and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonising culture and world view. It can also be related to those colonised people who are marginalised and excluded by their difference from the centre, subject by the discourse of power (ASHCROFT *et al.*, 2007). This term was used by Ania Loomba (2002) and Kim. F. Hall (2003) to explore their scope related to the aspect of race and racism. However, we do not aim to extend it, but recur to it in order to understand this binary separation.

1 MIRRORING *OTHELLO* INTO *NEW BOY*

Othello is one of the thirty-nine plays among masterpieces written by William Shakespeare, the English playwright, poet, and actor. Widely regarded as the greatest writer and dramatist of all times, considering how much his works have inspired and still inspire generations, Shakespeare has left as part of his legacy 39 plays, 154 sonnets, three long-narrative poems, and other unfinished verses. His plays have been translated into almost all living-languages and have been performed frequently around the globe. What arguably gives us an argument to justify his presence on different stages is the importance of his work nowadays, which is constantly being studied and reinterpreted, especially in terms of performance. In spite of that, this work seeks to study *Othello* concerning the play script in comparison to the novel *New Boy*, which is part of a project to give William Shakespeare's plays a tone that matches our contemporaneity.

1.1 *Othello*, by Shakespeare

The tragedy written by William Shakespeare around 1603 is set partly in Venice and on the island of Cyprus. The narrative depicts the anxieties, tribulations, and inner conflicts of a Moorish military commander named Othello, who serves a Venetian army in defence of Cyprus against the Ottoman invasion. However, the Ottoman-Venetian War is a subplot, as the real conflict lies between Iago and Othello. This conflict is mostly one-sided and invisible, yet provoked by Iago. Iago is Othello's flag bearer, whose malignity and determination are capable of piercing one's soul. This evil soul poisons Othello against his beloved wife, Desdemona, a pure-hearted Venetian woman, who later succumbs due to groundless jealousy and blind rage.

Shakespeare's play depicts Othello's narrative; the main character which the play revolves around. Othello is a black military general who serves Venice and is always proud of his victories on the battlefield, but when it comes to his social life, it is possible to argue that he does not seem to fit in— or, even better, feels like an outsider. According to Kim Hall (2003, p. 367), inside the play, it is possible to find many elements staged to discomfit “its patriarchal, somewhat cloistered culture”, such as the status of outsider. In this way, Hall (2003, p. 367) explores how “Othello's perceptions are challenged throughout the play”, having to “choose between his wife and his ancient”; to choose between his image of Desdemona and the image of Desdemona portrayed by Iago. Due to his lack of confidence and feeling like an outsider

inside Venetian society, Othello is constantly tricked by Iago, who happens to be his flag-bearer and, later on, his lieutenant, after he deposes Cassio of his position. In this way, Hall (2003, p. 367) argues that Othello inhabits a potential divide between “an overtly racist one (bestial, carnal) proffered by Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio, and the noble Moor (restrained and dignified) seen by Desdemona, Cassio, and Othello himself”. This view emphasises the inner conflict Othello is constantly in.

Despite the fact Othello is in a much higher position than that of Iago and, for that, he should never lack confidence (or even self-worth), it seems like he is constantly subdued to the flagbearer’s willingness and version due to the colour of his skin. Hall (2003) emphasises Iago’s wish to destroy and exclude evil, incarnated by Othello, in “terms of blackness and cultural difference” (p. 370), attempting to make Othello be seen as the “stereotypically violent Moor” (p. 368). From the author’s perspective, Iago is seen to act as “an omniscient, controlling citizen, who operates under the cover of whiteness; he is the evil within who escapes whiteness by projecting sin onto others” (2003, p. 370). Considering this point of view, it is arguable that Othello’s play could be mirroring the own values of the time the play was written, as stated by many authors. Hall (2003, p. 367) considers that due to the Atlantic slave trade and colonial incursions in Europe and America, negative attitudes towards African-descended people were engrained into society, “making it impossible for critics to see black Othello as fully human” in the context it was written. Annia Loomba (2002) also ponders that, in Shakespeare’s days, European contact with other peoples has helped the Europeans to shape their own understanding of other parts of the world, becoming culturally more open and, in many ways, more insular. Loomba (2002) also highlights that at the same time Europe became aware of the different knowledge these foreigners and outsiders held, making them concomitantly attractive and a threat. In this instance, the author understands that:

The New World and its inhabitants generated a very different set of ideas about 'others' as either innocent or wild savages in a world of uncivilized plenty, ripe for European plucking. The newer contact with Africa made this picture even more complex, playing upon medieval notions of blackness but aligning them with the newer colonial promise of wealth and slaves. These histories of contact shaped the fate of those peoples-within or nearer home who were never considered insiders- such as the Irish, the Jews, or the Moors- and vice versa. (LOOMBA, 2002, p. 6)

The previous interpretation has caused the Europeans to change their perception of the world, regarding themselves as superiors. While discussing *Othello*, it is feasible to take into consideration that the play portrays the dynamics of the time when it was written, having the

African countries and its peoples – here having Othello as a metonym – subdued to the power of the white colonisers. In this way, one can convey that Iago's attitude towards Othello certainly represents the superiority that the European colonists rejoiced. At the same time, Othello's answer to these attitudes portrays the subjugation that the colonists have made to the communities of Africa.

Even though the main character of the play is in a position of power, there is an ambiguity that lies in his position, in view of the fact that one might expect a general to act according to his own wishes, without subduing them to the wishes of others, especially those who are their subordinates. Nevertheless, Othello is tricked into believing Iago's words, not by choice, but because he forces himself to believe a white male's perspective in relation to his own, which is set through the idea of colonial domination explored before. Loomba (2002, p. 47) brings to light that "the slave trade linked blackness to servitude, as well to moral inferiority". In this way, it is possible to understand that Iago's trickery of Othello refers to the inherent links between servitude and subordination, and blackness. These links have also been reinforced by Othello's past as a slave, although slavery was not always influenced by the colour of skin, as we can learn from the ancient Greece. However, the dynamics illustrated in *Othello* is a portrayal of how the colour of skin helps us to understand the relations of power within the play. Loomba (2002, p. 109) further exposes that "Iago's racial jealousy of the Moor is also a class envy of the servant who does not believe that his master has a right to be his master", considering that, in Iago's eyes, Othello's colour of skin should subdue him as Iago's inferior, and undercut Othello's service to the state in addition to his royal lineage. Yet, the author also reveals Iago's duplicitous behaviour towards Othello, apparently his loyal servant who seeks to take over and reverse the control to himself. In such a manner, there is an inversion in the master-servant relationship from the moment Iago assumes control over his master, meanwhile Iago "states his own loyalty and subservience" (LOOMBA, 2002, p. 109-110). Taking this point into consideration, Orkin (1987, p. 187) asserts that "Iago uses racism against an individual whose skills, ability, and success in crucial ways exceed his own. And he uses it as a tactic– when he believes it may afford him some material advantage over the man whom he wishes to control, and if possible destroy". Thus, it is possible to emphasise again that Iago's wish to control his master illustrates and refers to the optics between domination and subordination.

In this regard, it is sustainable to consider that Othello does present not only a lack of belonging and fear of not fitting in, but also a self-contempt, which can be visible in his behaviour regarding Desdemona. Loomba (2002, p. 91) asserts that Othello is “a nightmare of racial hatred and male violence”. This point in question articulates with Othello’s perception of himself, generating Othello’s racial and self-hate, and also his violence towards his wife. Although deceived by Iago, Othello easily falls into believing his wife, who chose and married him willingly, would lie with Cassio and constantly doubts her own words against his arguments. In this perspective, many authors review the relationship between jealousy and race concerning Othello’s behaviour towards Desdemona. Loomba (2002 p. 54) understands that jealousy is a term understood as belonging to the traits of Moors, Turks, and Africans, “even if, like Othello, they no longer lived in ‘the South’”, reinforcing the stereotypes of Southern men. Even though jealousy is considered a biological part of the inner self of Othello, it is important to point out Iago’s manipulation and encouragement of this violence “by evoking equally commonplace images of women's duplicity” (LOOMBA, 2002, p. 97). In this sense, the author comprehends that male jealousy in Othello’s play is determined by racial differences and female infidelity that was believed to exist at this time.

Moreover, it is important to discuss how women were portrayed in the current society where the play is set. Loomba (2002, p. 99) states that “Italian, and especially Venetian women were reputed to be particularly licentious”. Venice was also repeatedly portrayed as a city full of courtesans, which caused the theatre to portray this idea. Nonetheless, it is vital to consider that Desdemona’s possible infidelity inside the narrative is inserted in the second plan, that is, as a consequence, once it is incurred by male jealousy, incorporated by the stereotypical view of black people, triggered by Iago’s machinations, that are only effective because Othello is believed to be predisposed to believe him. Additionally, it is possible to infer, according to Loomba’s (2002, p. 100) point of view, English stories of patriarchal violence concerning black people “served both to define the incivility of these cultures and to offer models for domestic control of unruly women”, portrayal also loyal to how women were viewed and that helped to trigger Othello’s “predisposal” jealousy.

Misled by the idea Desdemona would get tired of him, as it is argued that his looks were not exactly ideal, Othello discredits her, and due to how he feels, especially in self-contempt, it is possible to infer that a chauvinist framework is set as consequence, once he acknowledges Iago’s testimony rather than hers. In the light of Hall (2003), aspects related to Desdemona’s

description as a dangerously desiring woman, are brought into perspective by Iago. Othello kills Desdemona in the end out of jealousy, that is triggered by his own sexist attitudes, which are, in turn, initially triggered by his colour of skin. As claimed by Orkin (1987), Othello's sense of betrayal is intensified by his inner conflict with his consciousness or identity² concerning racism. In this way, Iago, aware of his internal fight, strives to perpetrate Othello's sense of self and encourage his "acceptance of a version of himself and his interaction with others drawn from the discourse of racism" (ORKIN, 1987, p. 174). Meanwhile, for Loomba (2002, p. 91):

Iago's machinations are effective because Othello is predisposed to believing his pronouncements about the inherent duplicity of women, and the necessary fragility of an 'unnatural' relationship between a young, white, well-born woman and an older black soldier. Ideologies, the play tells us, only work because they are not entirely external to us. Othello is a victim of racial beliefs precisely because he becomes an agent of misogynist ones.

That is, Othello's behaviour towards Desdemona can also be mirrored by how women are seen by the patriarchal society at that time, regarded as possessions.

1.2 *New Boy*, by Chevalier

Published by Hogarth Press, the novel *New Boy* is part of the Hogarth Shakespeare Series, a project launched in 2015 composed of seven books commissioned to acclaimed authors who had the freedom to choose and reimagine a play by Shakespeare in order to depict in our 21st century reality. Besides Chevalier's *New Boy*, the series is composed by Howard Jacobson's *Shylock Is My Name* (*The Merchant of Venice*), Anne Tyler's *Vinegar Girl* (*The Taming of the Shrew*), Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* (*The Tempest*), Jo Nesbo's *Macbeth* (*Macbeth*), and Edward St. Aubyn's *Dunbar* (*King Lear*). However, out of seven books that were commissioned, only six were released, as Gillian Flynn's 2021 expected adaptation of *Hamlet* was never published.

The world of *Othello*, one of the most famous plays of William Shakespeare, was reimaged³ by American-British prized novelist Tracy Chevalier, best known for her second

² According to Donald E. Hall, "one's identity can be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in short- or long-term ways, gives one a consistent personality and mode of social being" (2004, p.3). Thus, identity is what constitutes someone. This work seeks to use Hall's concept to understand how identities are portrayed, rescued, or used as a refugee by the particular characters of the narratives.

³ This term is used by the publishing house as a means to explain that the novel was going to be a retelling of one of the plays of Shakespeare

novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1999)⁴. Chevalier's reimagining of *Othello* crosses time and space to set in the 1970s in Washington D.C., The United States. The author's choice to depict an elementary school located in a suburban area in Washington D.C., in the 1970s, is influenced by her own childhood experience. However, as stated by Chevalier herself in an interview granted to *Shakespeare & beyond*⁵, this childhood experience was developed in an integrated neighbourhood, where she, a white girl, attended a school that was mostly black. In a different drive, she has also had a strong experience as an outsider when she moved to the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that what has made her shift the reality from her own experience while she was writing her book was not only due to her own experience, but also how discrimination, race and gender are themes still present nowadays and, in those days, when the novel is depicted. The author expects that

New Boy will remind readers of what it is like to be different from those around you. Whether it's skin color, religion, age, accent, size, shape, gender, or whatever, we have all felt out of it, and sensed people treating us as different. Conversely, we have mostly all been in situations where we are in the majority. I don't mean to preach, but that is a position of power and we need to remember to use it wisely and empathetically. (CHEVALIER, 2017, in the interview to *Shakespeare & Beyond*)

In those years, the country is still marked by the reminiscence of segregation, in spite of the fact it legally ended in 1964 with the Civil Rights Act, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The novel tells us about Osei, who is a Ghanaian boy and a diplomat's son who has travelled to a lot of different places, experienced different traumas, and just moved to a school located in a suburb, where he is the only black boy attending it. Having experienced being the black boy in the other four schools he has attended, Osei constantly avoids being the centre of attention and bringing attention to himself due to the traumatic experiences he has had in the past.

On his first day of school, Osei befriends Dee, who is a white girl. They start liking each other straight away, but it bothers and disgusts the people surrounding them seeing a white girl with a black boy, especially Mr. Brabant, who happens to be their teacher, and other colleagues in school. Besides that, Osei constantly suffers discriminatory reactions that are directly

⁴ This novel rendered her a prize in 2000 (Barnes and Novel Discover Award) and was adapted in 2003 to the cinema. Besides, in 1997, Chevalier won the WH Smith Fresh Talent for *The Virgin Blue*. Later on, she also won the Fellow, Royal Society of Literature, in 2008, the Ohioana Book Award and the Richard and Judith Book Club book, for *The Last Runaway*, both in 2013, and the Honorary Doctorate, Oberlin College and University of East Anglia, also in 2013.

⁵ This interview was granted by Chevalier herself in an attempt of promoting the novel and understanding the motivations behind the narrative,

triggered by his colour of skin. In this way, Ian, who is also a student at the same school, immediately gets annoyed with the new boy's presence and comes up with a plan to avenge himself and everyone who is also bothered by Osei. In this way, Ian tricks and manipulates Osei into thinking that Dee was with other boys. Then, Osei, who was blinded by rage and rising insecurity regarding his colour of skin (as he himself is constantly in conflict with his past and his present and looking for a sense of identity), disgraces Dee in front of the whole school by calling her a "whore" (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 178).

It is possible to understand that again Osei, such as Othello in relation to Iago, was fooled by a white boy without realising it. Although the narrative is set hundreds of years apart from Shakespeare's play, the conflict between the characters remains. In spite of the motivations being different and the plots being written to fit different purposes, it still presents a complicated and complex narrative. Osei's insecurity, feeling like an impostor, or even self-hatred is what leads characters such as Ian to get what they want, no matter the collateral damage it will leave behind. According to Robert McCrum (2017, n.p.), "Chevalier's drama centres on what it means to be the outsider". Bearing this in mind, it is arguable to say how close *Othello* and *New Boy*'s plot are from one another, as "the real lesson of this book is to instruct the reader in the profound, possibly unbridgeable, differences between drama and fiction" (MCCRUM, 2017, n.p.). Even though McCrum's perspective is narrow, it is a fact that these unbridgeable differences helps us to understand the genre chosen by each author, taking into account the possibility of putting into place a bridge from one narrative to another, that is, to establish a dialogue, which helps us gather a better comprehension of the similarities and differences between the plot, characters, and other important elements that compose these narratives.

As with Othello, it is also perceivable that the circumstances in which Osei is in do not help his situation, which causes him to hate himself as such. In the same way as Othello acts for revenge for being betrayed, Osei also manages to humiliate Dee in front of the whole school due to his feeling of being betrayed. Whilst this situation is better in relation to the tragic end of Desdemona, it is still a powerful narrative in which one can analyse through the lenses of racism, having gender relations as a background to understand the plot more clearly. In the novel, the female gender is judged and inferiorised in a similar way as *Othello*'s play, and its words are not as prevalent as the male gender and, in the end, they are judged in pernicious ways. However, the end of the narrative is very different: while Othello chooses to take his life

after he finds out he has misjudged Desdemona, Osei acknowledges his mistake but chooses to embrace his identity as a black boy, stating that “black is beautiful” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 187), and thus forgiving himself to some extent. Osei’s different attitude towards racist ideologies may be possibly waving the dynamics of his own time.

Tracing back from Shakespeare’s times to when Chevalier’s plot is set, one can consider that there is a relevant amount of time and that most social issues probably have changed as the narrative crosses the Atlantic Ocean. Nevertheless, these are themes that are still globally prominent nowadays and that need discussing, considering how much narratives like this still shock. According to Blair Mlotek (2017, n.p), “*New Boy* not only allows a better understanding of *Othello* the play, but also the continuing issues of racism in our society”. Yet, it is important to point out that they are motivated and influenced by different historical backgrounds.

1.3 Theoretical speculum

As already stated, since this paper aims to analyse the dialogue between two narratives through the lenses of intermedial studies, we now present the notions of dialogism, as proposed by Bruhn (2013); adaptation as revision, as proposed by Rich (1972) and Schwaneck (2022); as well as the relevance of cultural aspects, introduced by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) and Cattrysse (2018).

Jørgen Bruhn (2013, p. 70) understands that any rewriting or adaptation of a written literary work is influenced by the work it was based on, but even “the most ‘loyal’ or repetitive adaptation imaginable is bound to be unsuccessful in terms of copying the original”. Thus, it is important to dismantle the hierarchical relation between the primary and the secondary text, that is, the source and the result, in order to make one the result of the other, or making them both secondary. In this way, the author questions what is actually being transferred from one product to the other, seeking to establish a dialogue between the products engaged in adaptation, which, from his perspective, should be central to understand adaptation. Nevertheless, it is essential to understand the primary source in an effort to grasp a deeper understanding of the possible dimensions of the secondary source, enabling the comprehension of not only fractures, but also possible meetings and dialogues, as exposed by Bruhn (2013).

Departing from Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism, Bruhn (2013) argues that whenever a source text – which has influenced the conception of another or others – is conveyed

into other product, the main features of the source text might be transferred, such as the main characters, plot, thematic content, and settings. However, bestowing the author, it may not be all similar, and differences may appear in this “voyage” from one product to another, making it possible “to make some kind of adaptation analysis” (BRUHN, 2013, p. 72). Yet, Bruhn (2013) emphasises how important it is to focus on trying to describe, analyse, and interpret the inherent meaning in the process of adapting rather than an exaggerated goal-orientedness, that is, the result.

This “voyage” of adaptations “ought to be regarded as a two-way process instead of a form of one-way transport” (BRUHN, 2013, p. 73), making it possible to interpret in new ways, while studying the source and the result of adaptations as two texts “infinitely changing positions, taking turns being sources for each other in the ongoing work of the reception in the adaptational process” (BRUHN, 2013, p. 73). Thus, “adaptation is a negotiation that takes place across the preliminary borders of the two (or more) works included in the process” (BRUHN, 2013, p. 76). In this sense, the researcher emphasises that the practice of going back and forth in these continuous readings and perceptions between the two products can lead to a fruitful conception of the nature of the adaptation, which is arguably potentialised by this dialogic process in terms of interpretation and reception.

Bruhn (2013) further explores two dialogic processes, comprised of production, which is concerned with both the form and the content in relation to what is changed and what remains the same in relation to the “original”, and reception, which encompasses “how abstract or specific readers or spectators react to and change the cultural texts presented to them” (2013, p. 73-74). In this way, we aim to understand how these cultural processes are responsible for changing one product in relation to the other, whether it is the form or the content. Although Bruhn’s (2013) efforts were redirected to movies’ theorisations, we propose extending his view to the relations between the playscript and the novel.

The notion of re-vision by Adrienne Rich (1972, p. 18) discusses about the awakening of a collective reality, in which there is the “act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction”. In this way, she proposes that understanding where the ideas come from helps society to understand more of itself and break its hold upon it instead of passing on certain traditions. Rich (1972) argues that self-reflection of the past is very important. As such, we can finally understand “how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated

us; and how we can begin to see-and therefore live-afresh” (RICH, 1972, p. 18). The author considers that revising means that

[...] if the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at that moment. You have to be free to play around with the notion that day might be night, love might be hate; nothing can be too sacred for the imagination to turn into its opposite or to call experimentally by another name. (RICH, 1972, p. 23)

These ideas contribute to a broader understanding of the importance of the act of looking back in order to comprehend the impact in future unfoldings in terms of reception.

Wieland Schwanebeck (2002), in his turn, further explores the idea of adaptation as revision. For him, canonical texts have, as consequence, a degree of selective re-reading, considering that the cultural prestige of a text relies on questionable ideologies, mechanisms of exclusion, and imbalanced power relationships. In accordance to Schwanebeck (2002, p. 2), when a contemporary writer adapts a text based on a previous text “to highlight their problematic subtexts, they do more than simply ‘rewrite’ them: they extend the fictional universe (or, quite the contrary, they pick and magnify a tiny segment so as to scrutinize it more closely), using the source material as a point of departure”. When it comes to a cultural authority text, the author understands that it invites revisions and appropriations, such as Shakespeare, that always serves “as a cultural barometer of changing tastes, issues and values” (SCHWANEBECK, 2022, p. 4). It shows how the same portrait is revised throughout time, but communicated in different tones, as “revisions seek to alter the spirit” (SCHWANEBECK, 2022, p. 4) through the rewriting of the original. In this case, Schwanebeck (2022, p. 5) understands that any adaptation is a form of revising what has been said and differences in time and place is enough to “throw a fresh glance at a story when it appears in a different context, even though the content may look deceptively similar”.

Thus, adaptation as revision is an endeavour to engage critically with the content of their source texts and other paradigms of tradition, making it possible to read the sources in order to take advantage of multiple other interpretations (SCHWANEBECK, 2022). In this regard, this work aims to extend the ideas of Rich (1972) and Schwanebeck (2022) to understand how this act of looking back can help us to understand the ways in which the dynamics of racism and chauvinism were portrayed in the past and it is mirrored nowadays, as well as the ways in which these dynamics can help us understand how the spirit of an adapted text is altered when set in a different context.

Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon (2007) borrow the concept of evolutionary theory from Darwin in terms of adaptation. Considering how each society has its own needs and ways of transmitting ideas, the authors think of cultural adaptation as analogous to biological adaptation, as both have a similarity in structure which indicates a common origin; “that is, both kinds of adaptation are understandable as processes of replication” (BORTOLOTTI; HUTCHEON, 2007, p. 444). Narratives, such as genes, replicate and evolve with changing environments, helping to comprehend why and how certain narratives are told and retold in different cultures. Thus, the authors consider that the source could be viewed as the “ancestor”, from which adaptations derive, instead of imposing a hierarchical value.

Moreover, Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007), bestowing Richard Dawkins’s meme concept, identify narratives as a unit of cultural transmission; an inheritance passed on through generations, enabling the replication of adaptations. In view of the fact that new means of communication have been arising, it is expected that different plots will arise as such, as exposed by the researchers. Nonetheless, that is not what has been happening, as the same narratives are being retold over and over again through different ways, revealing that societies may change, but the similar needs to retell an alike narrative, although adapted, remain the same. As such, Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) state that when a vehicle (which serves to disseminate narrative ideas) is not propagating the narrative correctly (according to the expectations), a new vehicle needs to be chosen in order to propagate the message adequately. Consequently, the authors understand adaptation as the result of the union between narrative ideas and the cultural environment, leading to a successful replication that may or may not change, depending on the changes in the environment, regarded as cultural selection, which refers to the survival of narratives through the process of replication into future generations. Thus, changes in the narrative are the elements that can be circumstantial to regard a narrative as adaptive; however, not all changes are adaptives, as it can only be when there was a cultural selection which has caused this particular retelling to change in order to better fit its culture or environment, making it possible for certain narratives to be told from one generation to another. In this way, it is possible to argue that what makes a narrative prevail is its currency in today’s society and also its adaptation across cultures, which dialogues with “the human desire to tell and retell certain stories” (BORTOLOTTI; HUTCHEON, 2007, p. 454).

Although Patrick Cattrysse (2018) does not consider the ideas of Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007), by comparing biological adaptation to cultural adaptation, the author

considers that the evolutionary view of the cultural adaptation approach may contribute to the understanding of adaptations in terms of the process or the results of an item “changing or being changed to better fit their new surroundings” (CATTRYSE, 2018, p. 40). In this way, Cattrysse (2018) establishes his argument in the differences between ipsative and additive forms of adaptation, identifying that the former represents a form of self-adaptation, while the latter refers to the adaptation of something into a separate entity, commonly found in adaptation studies. Ipsative adaptation’s additional requirement of ‘self-replacement’ distinguishes it from the additive version of adaptation, that is commonly associated with the adaptations of literary texts, such as what is seen with *New Boy* and *Othello*. In these cases, the previous work has been left untouched and the adapted work has been modified to entail a change in its perception, adding one or more items to the initial version, and, thus, installing self-other (dis)similarity relations. In this sense, the questions of whether and how the additive adaptation process, such as the modern adaptation of *Othello* to *New Boy*, actually modifies and impacts the source materials in the same way that the ipsative adaptation still remains a matter of debate, according to Cattrysse (2018).

While such additive adaptations do not physically touch or change their source, it must be considered how the original text may be viewed after being translated or adapted to look differently. In this way, Cattrysse (2018), based on the ideas of Bruhn (2013), has highlighted the importance of considering the changes of adaptation being inferred on the originating text, and considers the redefinition of ‘adaptation’ to encompass an ongoing and incessant two- way instead of one- way process. Thus, he calls attention to how studying adaptation in evolutionary terms “also means to assume that the adaptation process is goal-driven” (CATTRYSSSE, 2018, p. 44), that is, focusing on achieving its goal.

These goals may be related to portraying society and adapting narratives according to a changing environment, as Cattrysse (2018, p. 46) states that the adaptation process is understood to be teleological, aiming “at a better fit into the hosting environment”, while also emphasising the shifts which occurred from the source to the adaptation. “When it comes to explaining why these shifts occurred, the analytical focus will need to shift to the relationships of fit between the adaptation and its new target context” (CATTRYSSSE, 2018, p. 46). In this situation, the author understands that only when it is felt an improvement in the entity, that is, to make it fit better in its new hosting environment, that we can qualify it as adaptational. Considering the ideas of each theoretician so far explored and the brief presentations of the

narratives considered in this final paper, our main purpose is to analyse the textual evidence while aligning it to the materials already explored. In such a manner, we are going to explore the themes of racism and gender relations in order to understand how the same narrative is retold and what changed between then and now, that is, between the play *Othello* and the novel *New Boy*. In this perspective, we aim to explore how the “voyage” between products, in the dialogic process of going back and forth, can help us to understand the similarities and differences between the plot, the characters and the setting of both the narratives. In addition, the ideas of Rich (1972) and Schwanebeck (2022) also contribute to the act of looking back in order to understand the unfoldings of racism and chauvinism in the future, that is, looking back to *Othello* to understand *New Boy*. Nevertheless, as proposed by Bruhn, looking into the novel helps the understanding the playscript. Finally, the perspectives set by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) and Cattrysse (2018) help us to comprehend how the same narrative is adapted according to different environments and cultural needs.

2 DIALOGISING *OTHELLO* AND *NEW BOY*

Throughout this analysis section, we seek to promote a dialogue between the play *Othello* and the novel *New Boy* in order to better understand the different scenarios in which racism is present, as well as chauvinism, which is incurred by the racism framework established in both narratives. We first explore how the relationship between Desdemona and Othello as well as Dee and Osei are seen by their surroundings and which reaction they receive. After, we discuss how the fear of the outsider is found and received in these societies, to then consider how these fears drive to the assimilation of stereotypical views of race, and how Othello and Osei answer (or not) to these confrontations. Finally, we establish a parallel between the relations of domination seen in the play and the racial and social segregation portrayed in the novel as a means of understanding its unravels.

2.1 Opposite as magnets

IAGO

Zound, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God, if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins and jennets for germans!

BRABANTIO

What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO

I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs. (*Othello*, act I, scene 1, lines 107-115)

The problematisation concerning Othello's coupling with his wife is reflected on Othello's comparison to a "Barbary horse" who will "neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins and jennets for germans!". Racism is here enhanced by his animalisation.

RODERIGO

Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,
I say again, hath made a gross revolt,
Trying her duty, beauty, wit and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and everywhere (*Othello*, act I, scene 1, lines 131-135)

The idea of the outsider "of here and everywhere" is also manipulated by Roderigo as a maneuver to justify the inappropriateness of this match between Othello and Desdemona,

evoking the idea of the Other earlier discussed. In this connotation, the outsider is not seen in good eyes and Roderigo implies that the “pure” Desdemona should not deliver her obedience, beauty, wit and fortunes to this outsider. This assertion delves from the idea of the black Othello, who besides not being Venetian, does not have root anywhere, a wanderer, and this is not regarded as a sign of virtue, which in Roderigo’s eyes, turns this match even more conflicting.

In the novel *New Boy*, the unsuitability of the match of the couple the plot revolves around also seems to bother. In the selection below, Dee, incarnating the modern version of Desdemona, and Mimi, who is the equivalent character of Emilia, are in a discussion in relation to the arrival of the new boy, Osei, in their school. Dee, who immediately befriended Osei, is trying to handle a hassle from her friend Mimi, who seems to be troubled about the idea of her friend going out with the black boy. At first glance, one may argue that Mimi is jealous of her friend because Dee had abandoned her, as the narrator states. On the other hand, while reading along the lines of the fragment, it is possible to state that this “jealousy” is used to mask Mimi’s real belief concerning Osei’s skin colour. Mimi is not only irritated or annoyed; there is also rage on her claim, stating her fear or uneasiness of her friend being seen with someone “different” from what was expected because he “stood out”, thus, emphasising her discomfort in relation to this match.

“I didn’t ask him, but I will if you want. I’m so glad he’s here. I like him more than I’ve ever liked a boy before.”

“Dee, he’s black.” In her irritation Mimi was more blunt than she’d intended, but she wanted to shake up her friend- and punish her, a little, for abandoning her for a boy, Dee snorted. “So?”

“So...doesn’t that matter to you?”

“Why should it matter?”

“Because he’s different from us. He stands out.” Mimi wasn’t sure why she was saying this; she wasn’t even sure she believed it. She was aware too that she sounded just like Blanca a few minutes before. But she persisted; she wanted to warn her friend of what she sensed lay ahead. “People will make fun of you. Going with a monkey, they’ll say. Not me, of course, but others.”

Dee stared at her. “Are you kidding me? That’s all you’ve got to say about him? You want to tell me he’s too different to go with?”

“No, I...Forget I said anything. I’m your best friend, I just want to make sure you don’t get hurt— not by him, but—“

“His name is Osei, Mimi. Why don’t you call him by his name?”

“OK, Osei. He seems nice enough. But you’re gonna get a lot of hassle if you go with him. And what would your mom say? She’d have a fit!” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 49-50)

It is possible to assert that this passage illustrates the idea of the incompatibility of the match already portrayed in the play *Othello*. Moreover, although Mimi declares that she does not think as most people would think, she makes it clear and contradicts herself when she

establishes an analogy between Osei and a “monkey”. Again, the animalisation of the black person is manufactured as a tentative way to justify racist connotations.

In another fragment of the novel, on pages 65 and 66, the students' surprise and annoyance at Dee hugging Osei in public not only underscores the feeling that this event was inappropriate by the surrounding public, but also reveals their misunderstanding as to why Dee chose the new boy. In this context of discomfort in relation to the figure of the new boy, the spectators articulate the justification for this discomfort by linking it to the image of the boy being an “ax murderer” or “a guy dressed as Santa who strangled the girl in *Tales from the Crypt*” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 66), highlighting the idea of Orkin (1978, p. 167) about *Othello* that there is a “white impulse to regard black in set way” making it clear for the audience about the similarities between both narratives and that one mirrors the other, although they may share different cultural and historical backgrounds. It is possible to infer that, even between the lines, a racist attitude is established in these descriptions, since Osei's skin colour is allied, albeit implied, to the incredulity of this relationship.

In another passage, the narrator makes clear to the readers Ian's reaction in relation to another event regarding Osei touching Dee. Likewise, it has provoked the same discomfort concerning their relationship. Instead of expressing surprise or annoyance, it portrays rage and the desire of punishing Osei explicitly, reinforcing not only racist urges, but also the portrayal of white beliefs at that time: the desire to punish in order to “teach” a lesson to the different, the outsider, who crossed a limit and that does not belong there.

Ian could have shown him what to do: a good old-fashioned crack with a ruler on the black hand that had dared to touch Dee's cheek. The moment he'd seen them with their arms around each other, a rage had coursed through Ian that he was still finding hard to control. (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 75)

It is important to call attention, as discussed before, that this passage may bear textual evidence of the historical background of the 1970s, influenced by the reminiscent of segregation politics the country has faced. Although it officially ended in 1964, it is speculated that society still carried the values from before, as not many years had passed, and, as the passages of the novel depict – “There were no black students at Dee's school, or black residents in her suburban neighborhood, though by 1974 Washington, DC itself had a large enough black population to be nicknamed Chocolate City” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 10) –, there was too much hatred in the air. By inference, it is possible to assert that, although the segregation politics have ended

legally, it may have continued in society, considering that Osei was the only black boy in this school located in the suburbs, letting us know that this was probably a white neighbourhood.

Othello and *New Boy* bear traces of different motivations, showing that the claims in relation to adaptations being influenced by the cultural needs and changing environment, proclaimed by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007), and the fitting of adaptations to attend new surroundings, contexts and hosting environments, as defended by Cattrysse (2018), may be articulated in this thread.

The same analysis made previously about Ian's reaction is also visible in Mr Brabant and Miss Lode discussion (below) concerning Osei's touch on Dee. This touch may be physical, but it rescues abstract meanings in terms of the racism which lies in this society, disapproving and disgusted of a relationship between teenagers of different colours of skin.

“Did I miss something?” Miss Lode said in a low voice.
 “Inappropriate behavior,” Mr. Brabant muttered. “He was touching Dee. Typical.”
 Miss Lode looked puzzled. “Gosh. Have you– have you been around many...black people?”
 “A whole platoon.”
 “Oh, I–sorry, I didn’t mean to ask about that...time.”
 “Seeing his hand on her made me sick.” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 76)

This excerpt illustrates the idea of the incompatibility of the match already portrayed in the play *Othello*. Likewise, these traces bear the dialogism between these narratives, although the contexts and cultural needs are different. Relying on the concept of re-vision of Rich (1972) and adaptation as revision of Schwanebeck (2018), it is possible to understand how this interpretation is transplanted in the narrative of Chevalier, considering that comparing both narratives is also a way of seeing with “fresh eyes” (RICH, 1972, p. 18) why it matters to talk about Osei's narrative in the 21st century in relation to *Othello* in the 17th century, as both stories motivations are obviously different. Thus, it makes readers become aware of how this retelling was reviewed and adapted according to the cultural aspects experienced by Shakespeare and Chevalier, separated by 400 years across an ocean, and also why it is important to talk about this specific topic in our present society.

2.2 Seeing through the outsider

BRABANTIO
 O thou foul thief, where hast thou stowed my daughter?
 Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her,
 For I'll refer me to all things of sense,

If she in chains of magic were not bound,
 Whether a maid so tender, fair and happy,
 So opposite to marriage that she shunned
 The wealthy, curled darlings of our nation,
 Would ever have, t' incur a general mock,
 Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
 Of such a thing as thou? to fear, not to delight.
 Judge me the world if 'tis not gross in sense
 That thou hast practised on her with foul charms,
 Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
 That weakens motion: I'll have't disputed on,
 'Tis probable and palpable to thinking.
 I therefore apprehend and do attach thee
 For an abuser of the world, a practiser
 Of arts inhibited and out of warrant. (*Othello*, act I, scene 2, lines 62-79)

Besides the already explored idea of the incompatibility of marriage, this extract also leads to the idea of the outsider. While this is not very direct, it is inferable that the outsiderness lies on the arguments delineated by Brabantio. A biased conception about Othello is implied by Brabantio, who is encouraged by his status as an outsider. By claiming that Desdemona has been enchanted by Othello, she is damned to the same destiny of the officer.

This idea of damnation, in Christian Venetian society's eyes, is considered as a condemnation by God to suffer punishment in hell eternally, implying a racist stereotypical view that the "sin" is connected to the colour of skin and relying on the idea of what this colour of skin entails: the strange, the unknown, thus, the outsider. In the play, these ideas are reinforced by Iago's racist and zoomorphic slurs directed towards Othello when he tries to warn Brabantio of the news that his white Venetian daughter has been sleeping with someone of a different skin colour. "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tugging your white ewe. Arise, arise! Awake the snorting citizens with the bell, or else the devil will make a grandsire of you. Arise, I say!" (*Othello*, act I, scene 1, lines 88-92)-. It should also be mentioned that the white sheep has long been idealized as a powerful symbol of innocence and purity within Christianity, which itself was extremely widespread throughout the Elizabethan period. Iago's portrayal of Desdemona as a "white ewe" (line 89) is sufficient to make Brabantio angry enough to want to punish Othello. This fear and disbelief that his daughter would choose to be with/ have her purity taken away by an outsider who looks different to them results in Brabantio trying to convince the Duke and justify to himself that Desdemona's decision must have been conjured by Othello and was not one of her own.

In the same statement, this idea is further expanded by Brabantio himself, when he makes it clear to the public that Desdemona has denied to marry "the wealthy, curled darlings

of our nation”, that is, what she was expected to tackle, and, in opposition, has actually accepted the proposal of “such a thing as thou? to fear, not to delight”, signifying the idea of not only how racism and the repudiation of this marriage is implied, but also how the “looks” of Othello are not ideal in opposition to the “wealthy” and “curling darlings” of Venice. Thus, it is possible to state that Brabantio’s response not only reflects the society’s view in relation to someone that is different from their own, but also evokes his inner conflict towards the outsider, the unknown, which helps to disseminate and shape the view of sinfulness and witchcraft.

The sexist pattern sustained by racist collocations towards the Other may also be discussed. Brabantio forges racist insinuations to build this chauvinist pattern by announcing that “such a tender, fair and happy” maid has been enchanted by “an abuser of the world, a practiser / Of arts inhibited and out of warrant”, that is, illegal magic, and abused “with drugs and mineral that weakens her motion”- that does not allow her to think by herself, unabling her of doing such a choice that could cause her more fear than delight. From this angle, the argument of Othello being a practiser of witchcraft is employed to justify the argument that Desdemona would not be able to make this choice, and the only alternative foreseen by Brabantio is that she has been caught by the magic of the outsider, in this case, Othello. Thus, it is essential to point out that Desdemona’s passion is regarded as transgressive and disturbing “because its object is black” (LOOMBA, 2002, p. 101), given the fact that she desires and chooses Othello, which is regarded as unnatural for people in that time. In this way, the stereotypical racism is claimed as scaffolding to rationalise this relationship and to illegitimate Desdemona as the responsible for her actions, convinced by the outsider not being a feasible choice. The theme of chauvinism may be implied by racism explored in *New Boy* in the same way as that which was already explored in *Othello*. Such as with Brabantio’s accusations of the poisoning of his daughter, Desdemona’s, mind and her inability to wed a black person by the soundness of her own rational, similar connotations are present in *New Boy*. In the novel, the principal accuses Osei of seducing Dee’s thoughts (see excerpt below) with his “chocolate milk”, itself said in the same accusatory, racist and derogatory way that Brabantio states about Othello. This event highlights not just the overbearing xenophobic characterisation of these two characters but also their similarities in refusing to believe that a black person could ever be innocent or well intentioned, and could only achieve love through conjuring, spells or unfair means.

“You think he pushed Dee Beneditti?”

Dee froze. If she moved, the secretary would see her.

“I know he did. Several of the children told me they saw him do it. But Dee won’t say he did, and that makes any accusations awkward.”
 “What, he’s turned her head, has he? Given her a taste for chocolate milk?”
 (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 165-166)

The pattern is recurrent in the following quotation, also part of Brabantio’s speech:

BRABANTIO
 A maiden never bold,
 Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion
 Blushed at herself; and she, in spite of nature,
 Of years, of country, credit, everything,
 To fall in love with what she feared to look on?
 It is a judgement maimed and most imperfect
 That will confess perfection so could err
 Against all rules of nature, and must be driven
 To find out practices of cunning hell
 Why this should be. I therefore vouch again
 That with some mixtures powerful o’er the blood
 Or with some dram conjured to this effect
 He wrought upon her. (*Othello*, act I, scene 3, lines 95-107)

Again, Brabantio weaves his argument by stressing that his daughter is “a maiden never bold / Of spirit so still and quiet”, which forbids her “to fall in love with what she feared to look on”. In addition, he reiterates that her perfection would never tempt “against all rules of nature” and heightens that Othello made use of his “cunning hell” to put “some mixtures powerful” into her blood “or with some dram conjured to this effect”, that is, or some magic was used to win her over. The fragment does not only present the persistence of the imagination that the character Othello is performing witchcraft because he is black, but also racist insinuations to give grounds for Desdemona’s actions, highlighting that she could never have done this choice by herself. In this way, Brabantio echoes racist artifices concerning the unknown in order to state his daughter’s innocence and naivety. Under such circumstances, Brabantio’s point of view is not conscient- at least not totally, considering that he may be disseminating an idea that has been rooted in the society that the narrative portrays, that is, the society from Shakespeare’s days. As such, the perception of the European towards the African continent has helped to build Brabantio’s racial inner conflict inside the narrative, considering that Europe regarded itself as superior and felt constantly threatened by the outsiders, which somehow justifies his behaviour. In this instance, Europe’s self-definition as the most superior society relied on the construction of an Other, which was regarded as different in terms of an “irrational, backwards, lazy, sensuous, and deviant region” (LOOMBA, 2002, p. 9), contributing to build the idea of the outsider within the play. The stereotypical view of black people was very important “to shape

the development of racial thinking over the next 400 years” (LOOMBA, 2002, p. 4-5), also helping to construct the view of Othello, that is, of the Other in relation to Europe, and to disseminate this portrait to future generations.

In this way, it is visible that the racism which lies in the heart of this Venetian society was fabricated historically, having the play as a mirror of this society, bearing in mind that descriptions of outsiders helped to shape actual interactions with foreigners and legitimised the exploitation of black people and nations through an ideological idea of whiteness, fabricated as a response to a certain historical dynamic, as indicated by Loomba (2002). It is therefore visible that Othello, although having crossed over the limits imposed by Venetian society by marrying Desdemona, is also the “exotic outsider who alone is capable of defending Venice against the Turks” (LOOMBA, 2002, p. 18). In spite of that, it is possible to contradict this argument by evidencing that Othello’s position in power may be paradoxical, considering that it may reflect the relations of domination between white and black, as we will further explore.

The outsider pattern is also recurrent in *New Boy*:

“I’ve seen your kind before. You planning to be a troublemaker at this school, boy?”
 Mr. Brabant muttered.
 “No, sir.” The words came out of him like a reflex.
 “Because we don’t take kindly to such behavior here.”
 “No, sir.”
 “You’re lucky you’ve got a girl who likes you enough to lie for you. God knows why.”
 (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 147)

When Osei eventually seems to “mess up”, as expected by the teachers, by pushing Dee in the playground, Mr. Brabant’s extraordinary blunt and direct racist outburst towards Osei highlights the reality of social prejudice and the freshness of division still raw in 1970’s America post segregation, emphasising the view towards the black community. It is expected that Osei, being black, is a “troublemaker”, as perhaps many other black people Mr. Brabant had encountered in the past had been, but it is important to recognise that increased crime rates within the African American community in 1970s America were due to unfair opportunities and deliberate underfunding of public services, such as education and police in predominantly black areas due to systematic racism, resulting in higher levels of poverty and crime.

“There were not many...people like us in that neighbourhood. So every time I walked past a doorman he would watch me so closely, and whistle so the doorman at the next building would notice, and he would watch me, and whistle. This whistling would happen all the way down the block. Usually they only did this when a pretty girl walked past. Even once they knew me, and had seen me walk by every day for months, they did this thing with the whistling. They said it was a joke, and maybe after a while

it was for them, but it never felt like a joke to me. It was like they were waiting for me to do something.”

“Do what?”

“Steal something, or mug someone, or throw a rock.”

(...) “What about your own doorman?”

“He was alright, eventually. He was teased by some of the other doormen, but my father gave him a generous Christmas tip, and that helped. He would never hail us a taxi, not even when we could see empty ones driving by. He would say there were none, or that they were going to other jobs. I only went in two taxis the whole time we lived there. (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 68-69)

This argument can be indirectly referred to by Osei, who mentions to Dee that there were not many people like him in the posh neighbourhood he was living in previously in New York. In this regard, these people watch Osei with the same ill intent as Mr Brabant, under the assumption that all black people must come from poorer, crime-ridden neighbourhoods and thus their presence in a rich, predominantly white neighbourhood is not well-seen, as they believe this is due to something wrongful and are therefore not welcome.

Moreover, one can compare Othello and Osei in the sense that both come from positions of relative wealth or power to the surprise and envy of their fellow white cast, yet both openly voice their feelings as outsiders and having little sense of belonging despite having earned such privileges legitimately – as stated by Othello in act III, scene 3, lines: “Haply for I am black / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have, or for I am declined”, entailing that he knows he is not like the other men of Venice, thus, he understands he is an outsider, as Orkin (1987, p. 175) understands that “Othello is well aware of the difference in behavior between himself and the “wealthy curled darlings” (I.ii.68) of whom Brabantio speaks.” – It is a stark reminder of the difficulties that black people have faced all throughout history, where financial success, while already more difficult to achieve than for their white counterparts, did not come with the same rewards of respect and equality.

Osei’s recognition of his place in society is exemplified by the passages below. In the first, he perceives people looking at him differently, making him come to the terms that he is different, while in the second he asserts he misses being around people like him, because he did not need to make effort to try fit in and he had an “immediate sense of belonging”, eliciting that he did not belong in the current society he was in, thus, making it possible to understand that he felt like an outsider.

Now, as he passed out of the building and into the playground, Osei knew people would be waiting for him, watching to see what he did, making as clear as possible that he was not like them.

Osei always sensed something much more profound: the ease of being among people who looked like him. His people, who did not stare at him or pass judgement on his skin color. (...) But that first immediate sense of belonging— and of being anonymous among similar skin tones— was one that Osei welcomed every summer and missed for the rest of the year. (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 58-59)

Understanding the way narratives are adapted to attend cultural needs and a different environment, as proposed by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) and Cattrysse (2018), helps us to understand the similarities concerning the theme of the outsider. While Othello's narrative is depicted in Venetian society and may be highly influenced by the ideals of the colonisers, as well as Elizabethan values, Osei's narrative is explored in a totally different background, which is the American society, and motivated by different aspects, which may be the reminiscents of the segregation politics experienced at the same time the novel was set. Furthermore, it is a fact that, although these narratives present different historical landmarks and are influenced by different ideals, it did not prevent the exploration of similar issues. Its cultural needs and plot changes according to the environment it is set. However, what makes the narrative survive is the fact that it still matters.

2.3 Stereotypical reflection

RODERIGO

What a full fortune does the thicklips owe
If he can carry't thus! (*Othello*, act I, scene 1, lines 65-66)

Both Osei and Othello suffer the same prejudices from the surrounding cast that act as a narrative pushed on the reader of how darker skinned people have consistently been viewed across history. Despite Othello's superior military status and a high authority within political circles, his physical attributes, such as the colour of his skin and his "thicklips" – a derogatory remark made by Roderigo, serve to reflect him as inferior in a white men's society, reflecting a reality in which race as well as its stereotypical view is widely widespread and also used to justify certain beliefs.

OTHELLO

Her name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black
As mine own face. If there be cords or knives,
Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,
I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied! (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, lines 389-393)

The idea of dishonour caused by infidelity is delineated, when Othello declares that he would not endure it, emphasising the prerogative that adultery was not very well-accepted. According to Orkin (1987), adultery was also seen as deserving of punishment and death in that time, which leads Othello to also incorporate this into his character. In the different passages below, we can see Othello personifying his hate towards Desdemona due to the manipulative view Iago has given him, “attempting to make Othello become the stereotypically violent Moor [...] concurrently to make Desdemona seem tainted and unchaste” (HALL, 2002, p. 368). Bearing this in mind, it is visible that the idea of the violent Moor and the racial stereotype of being easily jealous is here emphasised, once he wishes to revenge himself for having his honour hurt by tearing Desdemona into pieces or finding “some swift means of death / For the fair devil” (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, lines 478-479). On that account, it is evident the premise in which the narrative mirrors society values and beliefs, owing to the fact that both the stereotypical and racist view of the jealous and violent Moor is once again portrayed, even though he was firstly encouraged by Iago’s maneuverings.

OTHELLO
I’ll tear her all to pieces! (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, line 434)

OTHELLO ...
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven:
'Tis gone!
Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell,
Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
For 'tis of aspics' tongues! (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, lines 448-453)

OTHELLO
Damn her, lewd minx: O damn her, damn her!
Come, go with me apart; I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil. (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, lines 478-481)

The same stereotypical view of race is also found in *New Boy*. Along the lines below, the narrator portrays the teachers’ behaviour towards Osei. From Osei’s focalization, the narrator tells the audience about the teacher’s willingness to punish Osei, revealing their discomfort in having a black kid in their classroom, which was, for the most part, composed of white kids. Although Osei has passed to several schools in the past, it seems like he has had similar experiences in most of them. As such, it may be possible to infer that racist stereotypical view of black people are still prevalent in this society. By analysing the extract below closely, it demonstrates how the behaviours portrayed by the teachers towards Osei are justified based

on the colour of his skin, which causes them to expect that he could not stand out from the other students and leads them to think he was not clever enough, or was likely to misbehave. When Osei scores high grades, or shows a certain level of cleverness, it is assumed this was due to cheating, bearing in mind the teachers did not believe a black kid could know that “bronze was made of tin and copper, or that Berlin had a wall dividing it in two”. Brabantio’s statement concerning Othello by trying to justify racism aligned with the colour of skin reveals a similar pattern.

O suspected his teachers were relieved that he didn’t draw attention to himself by acting up or flunking or being a star student. Clearly some of them expected bad behaviour. They would have been a little nervous of a black boy giving them a hard time, but others may have wanted him to, so that they could punish him. Sometimes they were taken aback by O scoring 100 percent on a pop quiz in maths, or knowing that bronze was made of tin and copper, or that Berlin had a wall dividing it in two. They shot him looks that revealed suspicions he was cheating somehow, though actually he had gained much of his knowledge from overhearing Sisi as she did her homework. (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 54)

The following sentence, which is part of Osei’s point of view, although narrated in the third-person, expands the idea of the black deserving punishment because it is thought that, because of being black, he is susceptible to cause trouble, as if his colour plagues him to cause problems: “When he made mistakes, Osei senses the teachers nodding to themselves, secretly pleased. This was what they expected— a black boy messing up” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 55).

The notion of Osei’s lack of knowledge and intelligence is also constantly stressed throughout the novel. Even when Osei appears to be shown the same sort of equal treatment as his fellow classmates by his teachers, many of the things said to him have underlying discriminatory connotations, characterising him as being “less fortunate” than everyone else or having “gaps of knowledge” due to the assumption his prior educational experiences were substandard because of where he is from, as it is possible to observe in the two quotations below: one pronounced by the school’s principal and the other by the conflictive Mr. Brabant, who happens to be Osei’s teacher.

“He may not have had the opportunities that you all enjoy at our school, so I hope you all give him every chance to take part in all we have to offer to less fortunate students.” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 56-57)

[...] “Osei, you can take it too, though I won’t record your grade. It will show you where your gaps of knowledge are so that you can start filling them. You may only be in my class for a month, but it won’t be wasted time.” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 126)

Influences of certain stereotypical views from Shakespeare's days are illustrated by these passages. However, it is valid to underline that this situation is being approached more straightforwardly in the novel, which is the assumption that the colour of skin black and intelligence cannot be combined. This one element is brought in different ways by the play and the novel. In the play, Othello's virtuous character is under constant deconstruction by Venetian society. In this way, his behaviour towards Desdemona is used to justify his description of jealous, irrational Moor, whose "nature/ whom passion could not shake" as stated by Ludovico in act IV, scene 1, lines 264-265, an idea which also helps to disseminate racism, as stereotypical views of Othello is being used in order to justify why he is jealous. Nonetheless, it is crucial to emphasise that both events are influenced by different historical backgrounds and were adapted to suit different needs and environments.

In some ways overt racism based on ignorance was easier to deal with. It was the more subtle digs that got to him. The kids who were friendly at school, but didn't ask him to their birthday parties even when they had invited the rest of the class. The conversations that stopped when he walked into a room, a slight pause reserved for his presences. The remarks made and then the addendum, "Oh, I don't mean you, Osei. You're different." Or a comment like "he's black but he's smart," and the inability to understand why was offensive. The assumption that he was better at sports because black people just—you know—are, or at dancing, or at committing crimes. The way people talked about Africa as if it were just one country. The inability to tell black people apart, so Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier were mixed up, or Tina Turned and Aretha Franklin, or Flip Wilson and Bill Cosby—though none of them looked anything like the other. (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 173-174)

In addition, Osei's indignation concerning black people and also his own life experience needs to be discussed. The narrator lets the audience know Osei's misery for not being invited to birthday parties when everybody seemed to have been invited, except him. Even though everybody seemed very friendly, Osei still had to face subtle racism from his classmates, when he walked on a corridor and everybody stopped speaking on his presence, or when one stated that "he's black but he's smart", very similar to the utterance professed by the Duke in the play: "If virtue no delighted beauty lack / Your son-in-law is far more fair than black" (*Othello*, act I, scene 3, lines 330-331), which propagates analogous racist ideas and evinces a common trace, although they were motivated by different contexts.

Moreover, in the same excerpt, Osei also expresses his indignation in how black people are rotulated or treated. This trace is very different from *Othello*, because it seems like he is speaking directly with the audience, trying to demystify the idea that black are good at sports, dancing or at committing crimes or that black look all the same. By drafting the dialogue

between the two narratives, as proposed by Bruhn (2013), it is identifiable how *New Boy* was constructed to fit the reality of the black people experiencing a strong politics of segregation and a wave of racism, and how they have tried to fight this back and to deconstruct the stereotypical view of their own. As claimed by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007), narratives replicate and adapt to cultural needs of a specific time and environment, that is, *New Boy* is a product of these circumstances. While following Cattrysse (2018), who comprehend adaptation as an inherent process to better fit a hosting environment, the novel has been constructed to meet the dynamics of the segregation politics and of a different racialised context. In both circumstances, it is evident that the novel, and more specifically Osei's character, may be waving the American dynamics of the 1970s.

2.3.1 Identity emulation

While Othello is in constant conflict with his identity, it seems that Osei is capable of embracing himself as a black boy.

“It was only when he had joined them that Ian said, “Black people are good at sports, right?” [...] Osei didn't grimace, or hit him, or walk away. Here was a straight talker. It was almost a relief to hear the prejudices out in the open. Now he could be open too. “*This* black boy is,” he said. (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 61, author's emphasis)

Osei is here confronted by Ian, who openly disseminates a stereotypical vision that black people are good at sports, and keeps awaiting for Osei's confirmation. Besides displaying Osei's relief, the narrator makes it clear for the readers that Osei does not only state that he is a black boy, but also good at sports. Notwithstanding, it is arguable that the emphasis put on the word “this” by Osei shows not only him embracing his identity; it entails a break of expectation in the eyes of the public, who probably expected Osei to repress himself. In this way, Osei's answer subtly tries to break with the idea that all black people are good at sports, in view of the fact that instead of affirming “we are”, he chooses to include only himself in the answer, while underlining that he is good, thus, leaving implied that he does not believe this prejudiced speculation.

By putting this attitude in perspective, it is highly likely that Osei's confrontation of this belief conforms with the Black Power Movement answer to the racial segregation in the United States. Thus, Osei's answer evidences his racial and class consciousness, probably acquired in the time he was living in.

“When he had moved on, Mimi heard the Salisbury steak lady say to the others, “That poor boy.”

“What do you mean, ‘poor boy?’” the tater tots lady demanded. “This is a good school. He’s lucky to go here.”

“Don’t tell me you don’t know what I mean. Do you want your son walking onto a playground where he’s different from everybody else?”

“If he’s gonna get a good education, sure.’Sides, he’s a new boy. New boys always have it first. He’ll get used to it.”

“Are you a fool or what? It’s not him who has to get used to it. It’s white people got to get used to it! And do you think they will? They’ll give him hell out there—and in the classroom too, I bet. Teachers are as bad as the kids. Worse, ’cause they oughta know better.” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 90)

In this passage, by stating that both the classmates and the teachers would give him a hard time, the black women working at the cafeteria bear traces of this consciousness and solidarity with Osei’s suffering as the new black boy in the school. It reinforces and indicates the idea of the racial discrimination, as the ladies understand that the white people will not get used to having a black kid at the school, denouncing the remnants of politics not long ended.

Therefore, it is understandable that Osei’s attitude differs from that of Othello’s because his knowledge of the world was different from that of Othello, separated by time and space, making it clear that, yet there are similarities, each narrative was told and retold to suit a different perspective and need, evincing one more time what has been theorised by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) and Cattrysse (2018) in terms of narratives being adapted to attend different circumstances. However, we could only come to this by looking back to the past to understand the mirrored situation with “fresh eyes” (RICH, 1972; SCHWANEBECK, 2022).

2.4 Domination mirroring the nuances of segregation

Another aspect relevant to understand the meaning behind the play, which will be reflected in the novel, is the relationship between Othello and Iago. In act I, scene 3, Iago verbalises his machinations towards Othello, or, in other words, how he plans to deceive Othello into believing that Desdemona was cheating on him. In this way, Iago plans to “abuse Othello’s ear” (Line 395) by implying that Cassio is “too familiar with his wife” (Line 396) and that, due to Cassio’s good looks and manners, he would easily be suspected of having an affair with the Moor’s wife, as affirmed by Iago in the lines: “He hath a person and a smooth dispose / To be suspected, framed to make women false” (Lines 397-398). Subsequently, Iago announces that, because “The Moor is of a free and open nature / That thinks men honest that but seem to be so” (Lines 399-400), expressing that the Moor is easily led to believing men he judges to be

honest, even if they are not honest indeed, Iago believes it is going to be easier for Othello to “be led by th’ nose / As asses are” (Lines 401-402), that is, to be played or controlled. Then, Iago finally utters that, now that his plan was conceived, “Hell and night / must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light” (*Othello*, act I, scene 3, lines 392-401).

In this particular fragment, the relations of domination are subtly explored, having in mind that Iago articulates that Othello’s honesty will lead him to believe men’s honesty, leaving it implied that he believes Othello will subdue to Iago’s point of view, not only because he is a man, but also because he is white, considering that Othello is probably the only black man in the whole of Venice and on the island of Cyprus. Furthermore, Iago also gives hints to the public that Othello will be easily deceived into believing Desdemona is cheating on him with Cassio because of Cassio’s look and manners, making it possible to trace this into Othello’s racial inner conflict, which leads him to choose Iago’s testimony over Desdemona’s. This choice does not only portray the relations of domination, but also the gender relations pattern mentioned before, which guides Othello to succumb to the racial prejudice of the violent and jealous Moor. According to Loomba (2002, p. 94), “his jealousy is rooted in this fact and in his difference from Desdemona, a difference that Iago plays upon in order to persuade Othello that his wife cannot really love him for very long”.

IAGO

Ay, there’s the point: as, to be bold with you,
 Not to affect many proposed matches
 Of her own clime, complexion and degree,
 Where to we see, in all things, nature tends –
 Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank,
 Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.
 But pardon me, I do not in position
 Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
 Her will, recoiling to her better judgement,
 May fall to match you with her country forms,
 And happily repent. (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, lines 232-242)

This portrayal of Desdemona by Iago is also relevant to our discussion. He draws his point on the grounds that Othello is too different to the other various proposals that Desdemona was offered and denied herself, whose similarities would eventually draw her away from these possible matches, which is why she must have chosen to marry someone different from herself, in Iago’s point of view. Based on this assumption, Iago implicitly voices his argument by emphasising that Desdemona is possibly returning “to her better judgement”, repenting her decision, and preferring her “country forms” to Othello, which culminates in her possible

betrayal. When Iago delineates his argument by uttering that Desdemona chose Othello because he is “different” from her country forms, it is evident that a view of Othello as the outsider is put into perspective by Iago as a way of trying to make him inferior to the matches “Of her own, clime, complexion and degree” – that is, of her own country, complexion and social rank –, making use of racist artifices to succumb Othello to his power. It also presents a racist tone, as to say that Desdemona would eventually repent her choice, connecting it to the argument “when she seemed to shake and fear your looks”, emphasised throughout the play by different characters.

IAGO

I am glad of this, for now I shall have reason
 To show the love and duty that I bear you
 With franker spirit: therefore, as I am bound,
 Receive it from me. I speak not yet of proof:
 Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio.
 Wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure;
 I would not have your free and noble nature
 Out of self-bounty be abused: look to't.
 I know our country disposition well –
 In Venice they do let God see the pranks
 They dare not show their husband; their best conscience
 Is to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

OTHELLO

Does thou say so?

IAGO

She did deceive her father, marrying you,
 And when she seemed to shake, and fear your looks,
 She loved them most. (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, lines 196-211)

Iago also attempts to convince Othello of Desdemona’s apparent wrongdoing in order to gain Othello’s trust, while simultaneously slandering Desdemona’s reputation to sabotage their relationship. Making accusations without proof, he is still able to plant seeds of doubt into Othello’s mind by claiming he does not want to see Othello to be taken advantage of by assimilating Desdemona to the typically perceived average Venetian woman at the time: adulterous wives who let God see the sorts of exploits they would not dare let their husbands see. These doubts are only amplified when Iago reminds Othello of Desdemona’s willingness to deceive her father by marrying him, and thus further suggesting her capability to openly deceive those closest to her for her own gain or convenience. As stated by Loomba (2002, p. 99), “whether Othello imbibes these beliefs from Iago, or Iago only plays upon what Othello already believes, the point is that for all of them male jealousy hinges upon racial difference as

well as upon female infidelity”. Being a wise minded military leader, one might expect Othello to take a rational and methodical approach when facing the accusations put forward by Iago about his wife, yet we see an immediate, biased and unjust level of trust towards him as a white character who is able to leverage his racial position above Othello’s higher military status using the jealousy of infidelity referenced by Loomba (2002). Such panic, fear and overall lack of respect and faith for his wife, resulting in clouded judgements, are ultimately what leads to Othello’s downfall.

Although Desdemona confesses she has never cared about Cassio – “And have you mercy too. I never did / Offend you in my life, never loved Cassio / But with such general warranty of heaven / As I might love: I never gave him token.” (*Othello*, act V, scene 2, lines 53-66) – the portrayal of her sins still guides Othello to seek revenge. He plots to kill Desdemona not just for himself, but also as favour to other men she could betray, as he states “Yet she must die, else she’ll betray more men” (*Othello*, act V, scene 2, line 6). In the end, Desdemona confesses: “A guiltless death I die” (*Othello*, act V, scene 2, line 121). In this sense, it is perceptible the chauvinism framework implied by Othello’s self-racism, as one of the factor that encourages him to kill his wife in the end is the fact he believed Iago’s testimony in the first place. However, Orkin (1987, p. 180) states that

Iago, despite his attempts at secrecy, finds himself exposed. But the justice of his undoing means far less than the errors of those who in the play are good. Their fates result from the danger of language which, because of its opacity, may lend itself to distortion. The inevitable limitations of human judgment, furthermore, make error possible, rendering the good and the just inescapably prey to the actively evil and malign.

Furthermore, it is possible to infer that, besides Othello being a prey to the evil and malignity of Iago, he was also prey to the racism rooted into the society he was part of, which later drives him to reproduce his role. Iago acts as a foil character to symbolise the white master, who takes control over the black servant and encourages him to assume the role of the jealous and violent Moor. In addition, Othello's role is blinded by the relationships of domination being subverted in favour of Iago, mirroring the colonial reality from the time the narrative was written.

The 21st century counterpart of *Othello* is also influenced by Ian’s manipulation towards Osei.

The students had almost the whole year– indeed, the past seven years at elementary school– to get into their established groups, with their hierarchies of leaders and

followers. It ran smoothly, until one massive kick of a ball, one touch of a girl's cheek, and the order had changed. (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 79)

How could a new, black boy have wormed his way into the playground hierarchy so quickly and easily? (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 133)

Ian manifests his indignation upon Osei's arrival being capable of changing the hierarchies' order at school, highly influenced by Osei's colour of skin. This reaction perfectly resonates with the statement of Mr. Brabant, in which he states: "This school isn't ready for a black boy" (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 148). In this way, it is inferable that Ian's response, although mostly inspired by jealousy of the new boy having taken a place he has always wanted, as exemplified by his utterance: "He touches all the girls," Ian muttered. "He'll be going all the way with them soon. That's how boys like him are. Unless we stop him." (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 77), it also reverberates on the racist ideal's of the time, in which there was still a prevalence of the different gaze regarding the black people in the neighbourhoods and, by consequence, in the schools, denouncing that there was still a policy of separation of black and white. Therefore, their surprised reaction, sometimes horrified, towards the arrival of a black new boy in their school translates very well the remnants of the segregation politics the country was still facing, evincing strong contextual motivations in both narratives, the play and the novel.

According to Ron Charles (2017, n.p.), the narrative of Osei "sparks something else inside others, which allows the novel to explore a spectrum of racial attitudes", having the 1970s setting an important hint to "follow reactions across the playground and into the teacher's lounge at a time of revolutionary social change", divided between the all-white staff "determined to be welcoming, despite their anxiety, and those who feel no need to hide their suspicions of this dark interloper".

"Look, it's great you're going with Dee," he said at last. "Impressive, since you're a bl—a new boy, You move fast. All in one morning! Maybe that'll work out."
 "But...I know that there is a 'but' coming." (CHEVALIER, 2017, p.110)

Ian also manipulates Osei into doubting his relationship with Dee. By establishing himself as a faux friend to Osei and pretending to act pleasantly surprised by Osei's rapid success as the new boy, he is able to trick Osei into trusting his opinions, while simultaneously planting doubts and sabotaging his mind in the same manner that Iago does to Othello. What is more notable in *New Boy* is Ian's apparent slip of the tongue, revealing underlying racist connotations as a true justification for separating Osei and Dee; referencing Osei as the bl-, he

is able to pause and quickly substitute his words to “new boy” but leaves the reader to acknowledge the real intentions behind his character. Despite this, we see Osei, a wise and knowledgeable character like Othello, look past such obvious intentions and become easily poisoned and manipulated against a person he trusts. Ian’s subtle hesitancy and an underlying theme of jealousy incurred by fear of infidelity and a racial hierarchy is what portrays Osei as an unwelcome outsider, due to his skin colour. This plot is twisted many times throughout the novel as a means to show how the segregation aspects highly impacts the dynamics of the narrative, considering that Osei’s relationship with Dee is regarded as unacceptable through Ian’s actions which serve to act as a reflection of this harsh reality of segregation occurring at the time. When we compare it to Othello’s reality, the same aspect can be seen in terms of subjugation of individuals. Thus, it is a fact that domination mirrors the segregation aspect faced by Osei. This dialogue between both narratives is clearer when we rely on the similar aspects of the plot, which accounts for a “voyage” that allows us to make this analysis between *New Boy* and *Othello* in a two-way process, as proposed by Bruhn (2013).

2.4.1. And its unravels

After establishing a dialogue between Iago and Ian’s behaviour in both narratives, it is pertinent to go back to the play in order to understand the repercussions of Iago’s machinations to the relationship of Othello and Desdemona. Throughout the play, Othello puts emphasis on Iago’s honesty and diminishes his wife in case her unfaithfulness proves to be true. In this sense, Othello states that he would “whistle her off and let her down the wind / To prey at fortune” (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, lines 262-263), that is, he would let her go and make her fend for herself, not even giving her a chance to defend herself. Once he chooses to believe Iago’s honesty above his own will and also Desdemona’s perspective, it is possible to determine the relations of control previously explained.

This relationship of subjugation between Othello and Iago is sustained by the racism that remains hidden “at the edges of his consciousness or identity” (ORKIN, 1987, p. 174). Thus, his sense of betrayal is increased by the racism, which is also linked to this relation of domination. In act III, scene 3, lines 262-276, Othello declares that he feels to an extent a stranger, considering that he has “not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have”, and that he is getting old, thus, he uses both arguments as an attempt to understand the possible

reason for Desdemona's supposed infidelity by referring to his colour. According to Smith (2016, p. 110), "Othello's embarrassed confession of blackness as a stigmatised identity coincides with Iago's growing control over his black victim's self-perception, thus reinforcing the dynamic of power between white mastery and racialized blackness".

Later, he draws his supposed hate for her when he understands the possibility of her having cheated him and could not have what he understands should be his: "their appetites" (*Othello*, act III, scene 3, line 310). This reverberates the idea of Othello's capacity for love being bound up with his sense of honour; his understanding of marriage does not accept infidelity, considering that adultery was viewed very seriously in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, as understood by Orkin (1987).

The premise of infidelity being unacceptable is further explored in act III, scene 3, lines 389-93. Along these lines, Othello describes Desdemona's reputation as pure and fair, now "begrimed and black / As mine own face", relying on words associated with blackness to circumscribe Desdemona's character as corruptive and sinful. In this sense, Othello becomes an agent of racism, proving the assumption that he himself is racist, as he is in a constant inner conflict between his identity as a Venetian and a black. Thus, he draws from the racist discourse to "blacken" his wife. According to Hall (2003, p. 369), Othello's behaviour is articulated with the beliefs of the time, considering that "early modern culture's suspicion of women as inherently sinful subjects always puts them at risk of being labelled "black" and the "discourse of 'blackness' is mobilised in order to circumscribe female transgression" (LOOMBA, 1994, p. 27)." In this situation, Desdemona's transgression and sinfulness is related to her supposed infidelity.

Othello seeks revenge upon the body of the one who caused him pain, hence, Desdemona.

OTHELLO
 This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart:
 Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires
 A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
 Much castigation, exercise devout,
 For here's a young and sweating devil, here,
 That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,
 A frank one. (*Othello*, act III, scene 4, lines 38-47)

Othello's rage is already taking place here, as soon as he is convinced of her infidelity. Hence, he argues that Desdemona's skin denounces her fertility and "liberal heart", which leads him to acknowledge that she needs some sort of punishment, "a sequester from liberty, fasting

and prayer”, as if the fact of her hand to be sweating, hot and moist indicates that she is bound to rebel against the authority for the lack of fasting, prayer or locking herself away from the world. Next, he calls her hand “frank”, but not as a compliment, but in the sense of her being too honest and open to accept another person in her life. This paragraph in question is an allegory, which denounces the stereotypical view that women were sexually unruly unless properly controlled. In this case, Othello proposes to her to fast, pray and seclude herself in order for her to avoid being punished.

This articulates with the following statement of Emilia, who acts as a voice of reason to Desdemona, warning her about the male qualities that seek to exhibit women as a source of sexuality, a consummation for pleasure that can be discarded or “belched” at a moment's notice.

EMILIA
 'Tis not a year or two shows us a man.
 They are all but stomachs, and we all but food:
 They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
 They belch us. (*Othello*, act III, scene 4, lines 104-107)

Such an implied complexity through metaphoric symbolism may reflect her relationship with Iago and her poor perception of men, which as a result, act as a route to expose the male characters of the plot, most notably Othello, and the lack of respect and faith that he shows his wife. From this, one might suggest that the entire concept of the female gender representation in *Othello* is epitomised by the idea that a woman's purpose is to be dehumanised and dominated by men as they see fit, no matter how perfect a woman might be. Desdemona, who is repeatedly depicted as a madonna throughout the narrative, still falls into tragedy as a result of Othello's sense of betrayal, inner conflict and insecurity, provoked by his problematic relationship with his racial identity, which causes him to become the agent of his own destruction and also the agent of Desdemona's destruction due to the acquired values from a patriarchal society.

Moreover, it is also valid to consider Iago's manipulation of Othello. Throughout the lines 172-202 of act IV, scene I, it is noticeable the dynamics of the subversion of Othello's power in regard to Iago. In spite of the fact that Othello is in a higher position than that of Iago, he is constantly subdued to his flag-bearer's point of view. The passage portrays that when Othello seems to gain his conscience back by seeing Desdemona for who he sees her, such as “A fine / woman, a fair woman, a sweet woman” (lines 178-179), Othello is coerced and constantly reminded by Iago that Desdemona proved to be the opposite, as when he says: “Nay,

you must forget it” (line 180), while highlighting her bad reputation “She’s worse for all this” (line 193), making Othello to return to the violent state of the jealous Moor, by proclaiming he will “chop her into messes” (line 200) and making it clear that betrayal is not an option, as he later states that he is going to “expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty / unprovide my mind again” (*Othello*, act IV, scene 1, lines 204-206).

The previous arguments are what leads Desdemona to be depicted in a way in which confirms the stereotype of the Venetian woman, as illustrated by act IV, scene 2, lines 72-96, once Othello describes his wife as “that cunning whore of Venice / That married with Othello”. It is also pertinent to make a point about the language used along these quotes, where he leaves implied the sexist thoughts he has towards Desdemona betrayal, diminishing her dignity to the rank of a whore, a commoner, a strumpet. The whores of Venice were not seen in good ways, as they were considered not only sinful, but sexually unruly, what explains the generalised stereotypical view of women, thus, of Desdemona as part of this portrayal. On page 112 of Chevalier’s novel, although fit into teenagers’ reality, the same idea of Othello is explored, in which Ian tries to induce that Dee cannot be trusted. It echoes what was said in *Othello* about Venetian women, but from the point of view of a society with different values, while remaining true to the original plot.

In a similar way of Othello and Desdemona, a fragment of the novel, that can be found on page 177, explores Osei confronting Dee in the playground and accusing her of being a “whore”, which has great impact due to their age. While Othello’s accusations are stimulated by Iago, motivated by the racial and colonisation ideologies and relying on the perception of Venetian women at the time as untrustworthy and disloyal to their husbands, Osei’s accusation to Dee, however, is based on the aspects of the racial segregation, which makes it unacceptable for a white girl to go out with a black boy. Notwithstanding, it is worth emphasising that both narratives have chauvinism incurred by racism and it plays upon the innocence of both female figures as a result of the trickery of a white male.

Osei ends up believing Ian due to the fact he finds himself in a new world of white people without a clear identity; and not knowing who to trust, he is able to be easily influenced by a racist Ian. Such racist intentions from Ian become easily covered up and ignored by the narrow-minded jealousy of Osei and the freshness of the recent segregation that has made Osei accustomed to hearing comments from his white peers, who continue to make him feel inferior, which guides Osei towards Dee’s blaming. On pages 178 and 179, he blames Dee of “two-

timing” him with another boy named Casper. The difference from *Othello* is that Osei makes it more direct that her possible betrayal is instigated by him being “the black boy”. Although Dee tries to tell him she was never interested in Casper and tries to open his eyes that Ian is tricking him for his own gain, Osei turns the game by saying that she should not defend herself by “putting down others”. In this sense, the chauvinist framework is implied: instead of believing the word of the girl who welcomed him best, he chose to believe the other boy, whose apparent honesty is treacherous, but that was embraced due to his inner racial conflict and lack of sense of belonging and identity. Osei goes even further in his statement in a bid to humiliate Dee in front of the whole school as a way of avenging his weak betrayed ego, making it clear that Ian’s machinations were effective as with Iago’s. Thus, Ian’s reactions are reflections of Iago’s behaviour, leaving implied the undeniable dialogue between the two narratives through the mirrors of one in relation to the other. These dialogues were potencialised when we made use of the two-way process of going back and forth, as Bruhn (2013) suggested, in order to sustain our analysis.

The dialogues and meetings so far explored have as its main objective to analyse how *Othello* is mirrored in *New Boy* as a means of understanding the ways adaptations explore the same narrative under a different scope, considering the time it is set, the changing environment that crosses the Atlantic, and the different urges which has kept the message alive. In this way, we chose the theme of racism, as well as chauvinism to deal with these dialogues to comprehend the similarities and differences of the investigated adaptation.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Upon Desdemona's death, Othello is finally able to see the "real Desdemona" once he learns the truth, sending him into a spiral of depravity and self-awareness of the monster he has become. The respectable and caring character introduced at the start of the play returns, except now, the inner conflict of identity openly embraces the racist and colonist ideologies of Othello's past as punishment for his wrong doings. Before his suicide, he declares himself "one who loved not wisely, but too well" (*Othello*, act V, scene 2, line 342) and identifies how he was tricked and driven to madness. He proceeds to stab himself with a hidden weapon in the same manner he once stabbed a Turk beating up a Venetian as a way of condemning himself. In doing so, Othello symbolically redeems himself as the defender, destroying the threat he himself is embodying (in this case, the Turk), attacking the innocent Venetian, Desdemona. Poetically, justice for Desdemona's death is served by Othello's own hand as a result of the overwhelming regret he faces. In the words of Loomba (2002, p. 96-97):

[...] despite being a Christian soldier, Othello cannot shed either his blackness or his Turkish' attributes, and it is his sexual and emotional self, expressed through his relationship with Desdemona, which interrupts and finally disrupts his newly acquired Christian and Venetian identity. In the eyes of many Venetians, he remains illegitimate as Desdemona's suitor; as her husband, he seems fated to play out the script of jealousy and wife-murder.

Differently from Othello, Osei embraces his identity as a black boy when he states that "black is beautiful", as it is made evident in the passage below.

"Osei, what have you done to Mimi? Come down at once! I warned you!"
 [...] "Did you hear me, boy?" Mr. Brabant was incandescent, like a lightbulb popping.
 "Get down from there, nigger!"
 [...] "Stop that!" Miss Lode cried. She had turned bright red. Mimi though she was telling Ian to stop, but then she continued. "Stop that right now! You do not use that language, Richard. You do not."
 Mr. Brabant showed no sign of hearing her, but was glaring at Osei. The new boy was moving now: not climbing down, but standing up and balancing precariously on the top bars of the jungle gym. Hands free, he swayed above the playground. Then he clenched his hand into a fist and held it high, all the while staring fiercely down at Mr. Brabant. Mimi had seen that gesture before, in a photograph somewhere.
 "You know what?" he said, not loud, but penetrating nonetheless. "Black is beautiful!" (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 187)

Although having faced a direct reprimand, justified in terms of racism, considering Mr. Brabant's utterance "Get down from there, nigger", Osei still arms himself to defend his

integrity. As discussed previously, the 1970s, time in which the narrative is set, is highly impacted by segregation politics, having as consequence the awakening of awareness of the black community in order to fight the white supremacy monopoly of the truth.

Bearing in mind that this neighbourhood carries traces of being predominantly white, considering their surprise and annoyance for having a black boy in their school, it is possible to assume that Osei's conflict derives from the idea that he is surrounded by people against him, or even better, his colour of skin. Thus, Osei is triggered to conflict about his racial identity throughout the novel until it achieves its peak, when he finally dares to fight the system that punishes his integrity continually. In the final scene of the novel, this racism awareness is more evident:

“He swung his gaze back to Mr. Brabant. “Do you want me to come down?” He said this a little louder.
Though Mr. Brabant continued to glare at Osei, he nodded.
“Alright. I will come down now.” Fist still raised, O began teetering back and forth. Was it accidental or deliberate? Mimi wasn't sure.
“Stop that!” Mr. Brabant shouted, though he must have understood by now that he was powerless.” (CHEVALIER, 2017, p. 187-188)

Once Osei raise his hand high in a fist and began teetering back and forth, emphasising the symbol of the Black Power movement and his wish to fight the repression towards his being black. This causes a break of expectation in relation to the narrative of *Othello*, who punishes himself after he finds out the barbary of his actions, showing an additive form of adaptation, as described by Cattrysse (2018), as it was adapted to correspond to the reality the story is set and better fit the hosting environment.

On that account, it is a fact that both narratives are motivated by different sets of events and historical backgrounds (BORTOLOTTI; HUTCHEON, 2007; CATTRYSSSE, 2018). This dialogism (BRUHN, 2013) was enabled by looking anew (RICH, 1972; SCHWANEBECK, 2022). Thus, the differences presented in both narratives carries traces of the need to reimagine the same narrative to (re)tell a story in another hosting environment.

According to Smith (2016, p. 110), Shakespeare's assertion of racial hostility is an invite to understand the unresolved racial political conflict already evident in early modern period in which the play “serves as a provocative meditation extending into the modern world”. This idea is confirmed by Blair Mlotek (2017, n.p.), when she states that

Othello forces readers to consider how terrible it must have been for him to live among such racism in 16th-century Venice. Chevalier's retelling brings it home and makes us question if our society today is really any better. Furthermore, “speaking ‘of

Othello thus has multiple overlapping meanings: speaking for him or on his behalf; speaking about him; and, because of Othello's blackness, speaking about race. (SMITH, 2016, p. 112).

In accordance with Smith's (2016, p. 172) point of view, speaking of *Othello*

is an invitation to see and engage from a conscious, racialized perspective (whiteness is a race too) in order to better understand race, its dependence on contested categories of difference, and the contractual complicity exercised by the dominant culture in sustaining white innocence and a strategically requisite ignorance of oppression. [...] To speak of *Othello* will also include listening to members of nondominant groups in order to expand awareness that might lead to effective change and introduce relevant perspectives that can better facilitate speaking of others.

Thus, Chevalier's adaptation of *Othello* helps us to understand the experiences and values that contribute to the stagnancy or progression of humanity. The 400-year-difference between the two literary investigated objects could be surprising at first glance, however, it does not create a remarkable disparity from our society's morals and values, as the themes of racism and chauvinism are mirrored. Although both written literary works are shaped by the perceptions and historical backgrounds from the time and place they were set, it allows us to understand how these narratives dialogue and adapt according to different contexts, while helping us to develop our humanity and self-awareness of our world and society. Speaking of Othello and Desdemona, in relation to Osei and Dee, is an opportunity to expand awareness about these topics, that may facilitate speaking of others.

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