

## **Exploring Racial Struggles, Conflict, and Identity in Selected Plays By Shakespeare**

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper describes about the plays of William Shakespeare address the ethnic issues that were prevalent during the seventeenth century. The ethnic conflict constituted a prominent topic of investigation during the seventeenth century. Numerous prohibitions prohibited blacks from being in relationships with whites. The fundamental theme of the Shakespearean dramatization that depicted racism was etymological colonialism. The language was employed as an innovative tool to enforce racial discrimination. Furthermore, in Elizabethan times, darker-skinned individuals were effectively linked to Shakespeare's play. Consequently, the play has placed considerable emphasis on the Jews Shylock and the darker-mannered Othello. Shakespeare's works dramaticize racial conflict because they dominated their respective plays. Existing circumstances present a plethora of racial segregation instances; thus, a fresh examination of the issue of race is expected to yield a comprehensive understanding. Innovative solutions to the problem of ethnic conflict will be facilitated by this knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Race, Elizabethan, Conflict, Black.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Diverse elements have contributed to human conflict in society. At the outset, all parties endeavour to evade the conflict due to its lack of societal acceptance. Some attempt to quell the conflict in the subsequent phase, whereas others instigate it on the basis of democratic principles and a desire to redress societal injustices. Marx posits that conflict not only gives rise to dynamic relations within the preexisting social structure, but also initiates a comprehensive transformation of the entire social system (Bannerji, 2020). The initial dispute pertains to interpersonal connections, specifically those among immediate family members. Moreover, the bureaucratic dispute has an impact on the interpersonal dynamics within the administrative workspace. In addition, conflict arises from cultural differences and ultimately escalates into a global scale. Divergent objectives, misunderstandings, and moral differences are the source of the conflict. The primary causes of the conflict are miscommunication, divergent objectives, morals, beliefs, and ideas among the individuals. Given the impossibility of entirely evading conflict in one's life, this is more suitable to accept it as an unavoidable component of being human rather than striving to do so. Acquiring a thorough comprehension of the conflict and approaching it with confidence are both imperative for converting it into constructive momentum (Rorintulus, 2023). What is the precise definition of conflict? What causes conflict to arise? How might the conflict be prevented? What course of action should

individuals adopt in response to the situation? The aforementioned concerns are among those examined in the investigation work. As stated previously, difference is the source of conflict; in the event of a dispute, the individual endeavours to reconcile the situation through negotiation. Nevertheless, the reciprocal behaviour of the opposing party, who is content with his power display, leads to a post conflict between them. Moreover, the individual vents his or her complaints against another person, thereby inducing a state of disarray within the distressed individual's mind. Consequently, the mind was filled with increased insecurity and conflict. In an effort to break the cycle of conflict, an individual endeavours to identify with the subject, but a substantial disparity exists, resulting in anxiety (Mackenzie, 2021). The individual's extreme apprehension gave rise to a dispute. The development of tolerances may mitigate anxiety. To confront the conflict with success, the individual's capabilities must be enhanced. To confront the conflict with success, the individual's capabilities must be enhanced. Violent behaviour results from an absence of tolerance, and that violent behaviour feeds an individual's spiral of anxiety, tension, and further conflict. Furthermore, it poses a significant obstacle when attempting to react or respond to others. There is widespread apprehension among individuals regarding the possibility of developing a behavioural disorder. Both the cycle of conflict and the cycle of conflict avoidance are perpetual in nature. To establish peace in relational, cultural, administrative, and global conflicts, one must therefore calmly comprehend the conflict issue and respond appropriately. Peace fosters development at the level of the citizen, the government, and the state.

The plays of William Shakespeare are notably entangled with the subject matter of race. The society of early modern Britain was marred by ethnic issues (Wagner, 2020). "Singular or stable referent for race does not exist," explains Geraldine Heng, "because race is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences and not a substantive content." James Peterson, on the other hand, defines "race" as "primarily socially constructed phenomena associated with the experiences of Africans in America: coloured people, African Americans, Negroes, Afro-Americans, and ultimately African Americans." Discrimination against races on the basis of caste, religion, and skin tone. The individual's social standing has been determined by the colour of their complexion. The pigmentation of the epidermis has emerged as a significant impediment to human advancement. They are socially excluded from the primary trajectory of advancement. Isolation was prevalent on the basis of skin colour, and their portion of existence was consistently denied. It was across all spheres of life that African Americans rejected opportunities to live a respectable existence. That constituted the primary catalyst for fostering animosity and ire among the populace. Whites are also threatened by the animosity among the populace due to the fact that blacks perpetually struggle to seize opportunities (Karim-Cooper, 2023). The conflict led to a state of crisis within the community. Consequently, racial discrimination engenders violent outbursts and carnage. The politics of discrimination also contributed to the color-based prejudices that precipitated the partition of the population. Presently, modern society is confronted with the issue of racial discrimination; therefore, this work makes a modest effort to reestablish the topic through the application of innovative concepts and evaluations. Shakespeare has depicted various categories of characters. While some, like Hamlet, become increasingly thoughtless and take very little action, others, like Macbeth, act very quickly but consider very little; as an outcome, these

foolishnesses lead to the tragedies of their lives (Jamila, 2020). However, certain characters are associated with prejudice in order to underscore the current climate of racial discrimination. The terms bound, slave, and the fundamental concepts of race are utilised in plays such as Othello, Merchant of Venice, Titus Andronicus, and The Tempest; therefore, why does Shakespeare employ racist terminology in those plays? What does Shakespeare believe regarding racism? The theme of prejudice is reflected in Tempest through the racial portrayal of the Caliban. A variety of terminologies are employed to emphasise prejudice. The term "Ocular Proof" is employed within the tragic work Othello to allude to racism (Cooper, 2019). In the plays Othello, Merchant of Venice, Titus Andronicus, and Tempest, racial inferiority was symbolised through the use of words such as "Witch," "Monster," and "Slave."

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Akhimie, et.al. [2018]** examined the Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference shows how early modern racial discrimination affected social mobility. Reading Shakespeare's plays alongside self-improvement how-to books, this work shows how stigmatising some types of difference helped people better. The widespread belief that one could improve, or cultivate, oneself through proper conduct was paired with the equally widespread belief that certain markers (including "blackness") indicated an inability to conduct oneself properly, laying the groundwork for "racism." Shakespeare's plays criticise the conduct system through malcontents and social climbers like Iago and Caliban and earnest strivers like Othello, Bottom, Dromio of Ephesus, and Dromio of Syracuse, whose bodies are bruised, pinched, blackened, and otherwise uncultivable. This volume addresses race through the discourse of conduct, exposing the epistemic violence towards stigmatised others at the heart of self-cultivation and contributing to the broader definition of race emerging from recent studies of cross-cultural encounter, colonialism, and the global early modern world.

**Smith, et.al. [2016]** analysed the scholarly dedication to Shakespeare in a time when racial politics test is resolve to use the expertise for justice. An major public debate over the killings of unarmed black people has emerged at a time when the post-racial, colorblind America concept has become mainstream as proof of the growing desire to go beyond race and forget its explicit and violent history. The public's racial divide in response to these tragedies is startling. Othello worries about having a white narrator describe his story in his deathbed speech. The work contends that such a narrator is a model for modern scholars in majority white fields like Shakespeare studies who must tackle fresh findings on white privilege and bias in the US. Although subsequent critics and Hazlitt appear to concur that "we are Hamlet," black Othello has not reached this outcome. Conversely, the piece's impassioned plea, "We are Othello," endeavours to disrupt the societal stalemate regarding whiteness and effectively politicise the subjectivities of critical practitioners.

**Daghamin, et.al. [2023]** studied the historical and socio-political representation of Jews in Elizabethan drama through analysis of Barabbas in Christopher Marlowe's The Jew of Malta, Shylock in William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, and Gerontus in Robert Wilson's The Three Ladies of London. According to the plays, religious disagreements, usury and social

crimes associated to Jews, mutual hate crimes, and economic rivalry between the two groups caused historical friction between Jews and Christians. These factors have exacerbated enmity and strife between the two populations. Thus, countless Jewish stereotypes have been established, which has contributed to Western anti-Semitism. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used throughout the work to critically investigate the stereotyping of Jews in the selected plays. Anti-Semitic literature call Jews profane, vicious, killers, unscrupulous usurers, miserly, and cowardly. Shakespeare's Shylock and Marlowe's Barabbas are portrayed as foul-mouthed, unpleasant, deceptive, shrewd, devious, racist, and manipulative. Jewish characters in these plays oppose the burgeoning New Elizabethan Man. Wilson's Gerontus is honest, kind, forgiving, and noble. Wilson is sensitive to his Jewish characters and avoids anti-Semitic tropes. Elizabethan drama created contradictory Jewish and race discourses, as shown in this investigation. The Elizabethan drama's Jewish image shows how history, religion, and society complicate portrayal. The Elizabethan age may have seen altered anti-Semitism due to Protestantism.

**Lopez, et.al. [2023]** described the Shakespeare race representation will be examined in this the work. Analyse Shakespeare's depictions of race and gender in Titus Andronicus, Merchant of Venice, Othello, and Antony and Cleopatra. Shakespeare highlights the intersectionality of race, gender, and culture in marginalising non-white individuals. The intersection of race, gender, and culture, along with the significant differences between dominant and othered cultures, highlights the societal fears that arise when diverse cultures and people interact. This analysis focuses on the ways in which the portrayal of Shakespeare's characters, specifically Tamora, Shylock, Othello, and Cleopatra, is influenced by race and culture. Shakespeare uses race and difference, including religious and cultural differences, as a burden for his characters. The actions of these characters in his plays reflect the consequences of this burden.

**Tuan, et.al. [2020]** explained the Musical theatre emphasises face and race to simulate reality. From Ministry Show, Miss Saigon, David Henry Hwang's Yellow Face on Asian Face, Cats, The Lion King, War Paint, and East Asian performance Jekyll & Hyde & So On, the debate between artistic and authentic has continued. Theatricality may blend animality with humanity like Cats and The Lion King. War Paint's rivalry between two commercial superwomen illustrates cosmetic history. In Jekyll & Hyde & So On, Japanese director Koki Mitani and his ensemble turn Robert Louis Stevenson's western tragedy thriller into a comic intercultural performance.

**Espinosa, et.al. [2016]** explained the Critical race works in Shakespeare have provided valuable insight into early modern English racial formations and how contemporary understandings of racial difference provide Shakespeare cultural relevance. Critical race studies are marginalised in Shakespeare studies. This work reviews and highlights scholarship that has started an important conversation about race in Shakespeare to bring it to the forefront and highlights the promise of ethnic studies—particularly Latino and Latina identity—in Shakespeare investigations. Although investigation into immigration, ethnicity, culture, language, and identification in early modern literature and culture is influencing ethnic works in Shakespeare, the discipline should be expanded. This work urges Shakespeare and

early modern academics to promote investigation and pedagogy that diversifies Shakespeare investigations and the Shakespeare academy.

**Steinberger et.al. [2017]** analysed the dramatic contributions of two prominent Irish playwrights—Sean O'Casey (1880-1964) and Brian Friel—the author investigates the impact of Shakespeare on Irish drama. Irish drama rewrites and reinscribes Shakespeare's plays, which are rooted in history, nationalism, and empire. Irish plays also historicize England and Ireland's Subject/Object connection. According to the author, Irish dramatists used Shakespeare to react to the language of dominance and buttress their revision of the Irish as Subject. An investigation shows that Shakespeare's plays show empathy for the Irish Other. The author situates Shakespeare within English and Irish discourses as she examines his sympathies with marginalised peoples and his anticolonial texts.

### **Research Gap**

The reviews that are supplied provide insightful analyses of a variety of literary and cultural studies topics, especially as they relate to Shakespeare's works and how race, ethnicity, and social identity intersect with them. Nonetheless, these studies highlight a number of significant research gaps. The dearth of research on the viewpoints and experiences of non-Western or non-European civilizations in Shakespearean writing is one major gap. Shakespeare's works are rarely examined in relation to or as a reflection of the experiences of people from other cultural backgrounds, despite the fact that racial discrimination and social mobility in early modern Europe are widely studied, especially as they relate to marginalised groups like Jews and racial minorities. This gap offers academics the chance to expand the analysis by adding viewpoints from other contexts, such as non-Western civilizations and how they engage with Shakespearean themes. Moreover, the area of Shakespeare studies places a lot of emphasis on challenging racial privileges and biases, but comparatively less emphasis is placed on the larger effects of these biases on modern society and artistic production. It is nevertheless necessary to investigate how these initiatives could advance broader social understandings of race, ethnicity, and identity, even though academics support the inclusion of critical race studies and diversification within the Shakespearean academic community. These scholarly endeavours would be more relevant and impactful if research was conducted on the practical consequences of incorporating multiple viewpoints into literary analysis and instruction, as well as any potential effects on social justice initiatives and cultural representation.

Overall, even though the reviews offer insightful analyses of the nuances of race, ethnicity, and identity in Shakespearean writing, further research on non-Western viewpoints and the wider societal effects of diversifying Shakespeare studies is necessary. Scholars can enhance the current discourse on race and identity by filling up these research gaps, so leading to a more thorough understanding of the cultural and social dynamics portrayed in Shakespeare's works.

### **3. EXPLORING RACIAL TENSIONS IN SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO**



Othello, who profoundly cherished Desdemona, the progeny of a Venetian senator, and who wed him in secrecy, emerges as the protagonist of this tragic tale. This senator was known by the appellation Brabantio (Prabowo, 2018). In this drama, Brabantio is opposed to the marriage and cannot condone over this romantic relationship. Desdemona has provided assistance to Othello, notwithstanding the latter's Moor heritage. Moor Iago, who serves in the army under Othello, opposed the Othello regime on account of their shared heritage (Safer, 2022). Iago orchestrated uncertainties with the assistance of Desdemona's attendant and his wife, Emilia. An additional significant character is Michael Cassio, a lieutenant in Othello's army. He was elevated to the higher rank notwithstanding his lack of expertise within the military. Consequently, racism was employed within the play as a means to undermine the noble persona of Othello, the legendary warrior. Although Othello was of African descent, he emerged victorious in battle. The calamity befalls Othello as a result of racial strife. Despite Othello's conviction that he was not destined to wed Desdemona, she passionately cherished him. Iago's prejudice caused distress for the couple. Othello was profoundly influenced by pigment; he believed Desdemona admired his military prowess but not his dark complexion. Jealousy ensues in the tragedy when Othello appoints Cassio as his second in command while ignoring Iago and Rodrigo. Jealousy erupts in this instance against Cassio and Iago's politics of colour. The central theme of the drama revolves around racial discrimination in pursuit of anticipated goals. As one might observe the drama:

*“Brabantio warn the Venetian Senate*

*‘Bond slaves and Pagan shall our statesman be’*

*Brabantio argues in effect (1.2.98-99)*

The treatment of individuals as inferiors on the basis of their physical frailty, which is not the result of weakness itself but rather a subjugationist conspiracy. The character is weakened by the remarks about her physique, despite her considerable potential. Iago's remark has acquired the vernacular label "the moor."

*“Even now, now, very now, an old black ram /*

*Is tipping your white ewe.” (1.1.88-90Iago)*

The racial conflict serves as the foundation for the drama Othello, and this conflict itself is the principal source of dramatisation. Eldred Jones observes that "Ultimately, the character of Othello manifests as an individual of distinction, rather than being confined to a specific archetype of Moor." This illustrates the frailties that are intrinsic to human nature rather than the vulnerability of the Moors. The tragic effect is the result of the formidable character being weakened. The compassion has been framed by the protagonist's catastrophic demise. Iago provides a definition of those perspectives in the subsequent quotation:

*“But I will wear my heart upon my*

*Sleeve for daws to peck at: I am*

*Not what I am. (Iago, Act1 Scene 1)*

Initially, Roderigo pursues Desdemona, a distinguished Venetian woman, in the act. Desdemona had been secretly wed to his Moorish general, Othello, ever since. However, Othello was a general and Desdemona's father was a senator. In this scene, Brabantio disdains Othello for being the son-in-law of a senator. In response, Brabantio has vehemently gathered the militia in an effort to apprehend the Moorish Othello. Upon the officer's arrival, Othello was compelled to appear before the hearing concerning his clandestine matrimonial union. However, Brabantio is required to attend an immediate senate meeting. During the senate meeting, Brabantio disrupts the council by asserting that the wanderer Othello should be punished. Concurrently, Desdemona was in a relationship with Othello; she has been summoned to bolster the argument and undermine her matrimonial union. After her father abandons her, she makes the decision to accompany Othello on his campaign. However, she first spoke with her father.

*“My noble father,  
I do perceive here a divided duty,  
To you I am bound for life and education  
My life and education both do learn me  
How to respect you You  
are the lord of duty  
I am hitherto your daughter. (Desdemona, Act1, Scene3)*

Iago devises the conspiracy against Othello and convinces Cassio to seek Desdemona's assistance in regaining his position in the second act. Desdemona endorses Cassio's position inadvertently in response to his inquiry. Othello has even tenderly recited one of the initial dedications to the cherished Desdemona. When Lodovico sows doubt regarding the relationship between Othello and Cassio. As a punishment for his betrayal, Othello enters the chamber of his sleeping spouse with the intention of murdering her. Despondent over the fact that he suspects Desdemona may admire his valorous exploits but not his Moor physique, he casts doubt on Cassio's relationship with her. Here, Rudolph Shaw asserts that "Shakespainter challenges the sensibilities of his countrymen by employing the Moor as a tragic hero in Othello, which he presents to the Elizabethans." The ethnic conflict therefore constitutes the core of the tragic Othello play.

### **3.1 Examining Racial Strife in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus**

Shakespeare's nascent tragedy "Titus Andronicus" is a retribution themed play. Romans and Germanic tribal peoples, the Goths, engage in a violent conflict that is portrayed in the drama. Instigating retribution for Tamora's son Alarbus, Aaron, a Moor and the queen of the Goths'

secret companion, establishes himself as the principal antagonist. An protracted absence is broken by the renowned Roman general Titus during the Romans' battle against the Goths, which marks the beginning of the narrative. As captives of war, Aaron and Tamora are apprehended during the triumphant confrontation with the Goths. By portraying Aaron negatively on account of his ethnicity, Shakespeare employs Aaron as a symbol of racial tension (Mastud, 2021). The racially prejudiced attitudes of the era are mirrored in Aaron's darkness, which symbolises his malevolent core. The aforementioned racial themes are further emphasised by the fact that his affair with Tamora produced his biracial son. Aaron, who defies self-hatred and disregards the prejudices of others towards his race, demonstrates unwavering self-assurance in his identity, notwithstanding the fact that he is the inaugural Moor character in any of Shakespeare's works. A conflict between white Romans and dark Germans illustrates racial inequality in the drama, in which social standing is determined by racial distinctions and not by individual intelligence or merit.

### **3.2 Racial conflict in Shakespeare's "The Tempest"**

The *Tempest* by William Shakespeare delves into thematic elements of ethnic prejudice by means of the character Caliban. Caliban, an indigenous person of the island, is held captive by the formidable magician Prospero. According to scholars such as Upasona Kath Boraheh, Caliban symbolises the "other" that was colonised, whereas Prospero personifies the coloniser (Borah, 2020). This imbalance of power is reflected in their relationship: Caliban, who is compelled to serve Prospero while learning his language, is regarded as barbaric and uneducated.

The liberation struggle of Caliban serves as an emblematic example of the racial conflict. In an effort to reclaim his island, he devises a scheme to defy Prospero. Prospero imposed colonialism in Caliban in order to legitimise his dominance; this imperialism produced the "differentness" of the region. Race is further examined in the drama via Caliban's longing for Miranda. Caliban's servitude and Miranda's status as Prospero's daughter serve to reinforce the notion that love is exclusively bestowed upon individuals of superior social standing and fairer complexion (Hughes, 2022). Additionally, Caliban's language usage reflects the dominance dynamics. Initially acquiring Prospero's language for the purpose of communication, he subsequently employs it to inveigh against his master. Thus, the play implies that language can be employed by the coloniser to subjugate the colonised as a weapon of control.

### **3.3 Racial tensions portrayed in "The Merchant of Venice"**

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* delves into the intricate ethnic discord that arises between two distinct religious factions. In contrast to his earlier works, which frequently revolved around color-based conflicts, this drama explores the animosities that existed between Judaism and Christianity (JaniPranav, 2021). The fundamental source of this dispute is the divergent ideals regarding justice espoused by these two religious traditions. Christianity adopts a more compassionate stance in addition to strict justice, penalising wrongdoers without mercy, whereas Judaism emphasises strict justice and takes a more gentle approach. The



confrontation between justice and mercy emerges as a pivotal motif throughout the play. In addition to property forfeiture, the Jewish character Shylock is obligated to undergo a Christian conversion after losing a legal case (Lion, 2021). This underscores the existence of prejudiced attitudes and practices within the Christian faith, exemplified by the schism between Protestants and Catholics and the exclusion of Jews, which was especially pronounced in historical settings such as Germany.

Antonio, a Christian, and Shylock's animosity towards one another exemplify the racial and religious tensions of the era. These ethnic distinctions, according to Elizabeth Spiller, are not merely political in nature; they are also profoundly ingrained in the play's depiction (Spiller, 2021). The animosity that Shylock holds towards Christians and the animosity that Antonio harbours for Shylock serve to intensify the dispute, specifically with regard to money lending. The character of Shylock is portrayed in a paradoxical fashion, vacillating between being characterised as "gentle" and being portrayed as excessively severe (Bartels, 2021). This is representative of the prejudices and stereotypes that were prevalent towards Jews at the time. Moreover, the drama examines how religious beliefs and racial discrimination are intertwined. According to Loomba, the play portrays racial distinction by inverting or distorting customary gender roles and behaviours that are associated with specific races. This serves to underscore the pervasive discriminatory attitudes that exist in contemporary society.

Shakespeare's examination of ethnic strife transcends "The Merchant of Venice" and encompasses additional dramatic works including "Titus Andronicus" and "Othello." Ragmies and ultimate catastrophe ensue as a consequence of racial prejudice in "Othello," while "Titus Andronicus" depicts confrontations among different ethnic groups and the corresponding biases that precede them. In essence, "The Merchant of Venice" functions as a vehicle through which Shakespeare underscores the philosophical collision that exists between Judaism and Christianity, specifically with regard to notions of justice and compassion. This highlights the critical importance of unity and comprehension among diverse religious and racial communities.

#### **4. RECEPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF RACIAL THEMES IN SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA**

Scholars have devoted considerable attention to the reception and interpretation of racial themes in Shakespearean drama, which has provided valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of colonialism, race, and gender throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The literary conjunction of Moor and blackness in Shakespeare's plays is the subject of Ania Loomba's investigation, which illustrates the fluidity of racial iconography at the time. Scholarly investigations examine the impact of Shakespeare's lifetime interactions with the racial Other on societal perspectives concerning strangers and the Other (Kalt, 2019). These findings shed light on the changing notions of race and identity in England. Scholarships also investigate the manner in which plays such as "Othello" were received by the general public, tracing the development of interpretations concerning racial identity across centuries via literary critiques and critical discussions. Prominent academics such as Carlin have undertaken the task of reinterpreting Shakespeare's plays in order to tackle present-day racial disputes, employing adaptations as a means to intervene in more extensive societal concerns like racism.

In general, the aforementioned analyses provide significant perspectives on Shakespeare's treatment of race, gender, colonialism, and societal attitudes towards the Other in his dramatic works. They illuminate the intricate and multifaceted nature of racial themes that permeate his body of work.

#### **4.1 Critical responses to Shakespeare's exploration of racial struggles and identity**

The scholarly discourse surrounding Shakespeare's examination of ethnic conflicts and individuality in his plays, with a specific emphasis on plays such as "Othello," has generated substantial critical responses. Ania Loomba's scholarly investigation centres on the intersection of Moor and blackness in Shakespeare's tragedies, thereby underscoring the dynamic nature of racial symbolism during that particular time period. Reflecting global politics and cultural conceptions, Loomba's insights examine how contemporary depictions of blacks and Turks were both idealised and reviled, with historical discourses on Moorishness and stereotypes of black Turks or Egyptians serving as a link. Furthermore, by incorporating gender into the critical matrix for interpreting Shakespeare's tragedy, Loomba provides insightful observations on the anxieties and preoccupations of the early modern era regarding race. Specifically, she emphasises the significance of sexuality and conversion as locations where race could be identified. Through the use of adaptations, Carlin reimagines Shakespeare's works in order to address contemporary race conflicts and broader social issues such as prejudice. Furthermore, critical analyses have examined post-colonial critiques of Shakespeare's plays in order to establish a connection between criticism and the critical role of post-colonial plays (Saif Al, 2023). This correlation demonstrates how these adaptations confront present-day global politics and contest prevailing narratives concerning race. The analysis further underscores the significance of integrating critical race theory into educational settings in order to address unsettling conversations regarding whiteness, race, and racism in Shakespearean tragedies; it emphasises the necessity for a more nuanced comprehension of race-related matters in literature. As a whole, the critical responses presented herein provide a range of viewpoints regarding the ongoing interpretation and reimagining of Shakespeare's dramas' depiction of racial conflicts and identity. This evolution in scholarly discourse on race is reflected in the diverse critical responses.

#### **4.2 Evolution of interpretations over time and changing societal attitudes**

Shakespeare's examination of ethnic conflicts and identity in his works has been the subject of considerable scholarly scrutiny due to the development of interpretations and shifting societal perspectives on the subject. Shakespeare's comedies, most notably "Othello," have undergone innumerable reinterpretations, reflecting the shift in viewpoints that accompanies each succeeding generation. The various interpretations and adaptations have generated discussions regarding the enduring significance of Shakespeare's themes and whether his works are immutable masterpieces that address the human condition or whether they have become obsolete and are no longer relevant. This illustrates the wide array of perspectives on the matter. The enduring discussions pertaining to specific interpretations of Shakespeare's plays underscore the enduring nature of his influence and the diverse reactions towards his contentious themes; while certain spectators opt to disregard objectionable components, others exploit them as forums for discourse and deliberation. Shakespeare's legacy has been

significantly impacted by controversies pertaining to historical accuracy and authorship, which have contributed to a more discerning understanding of his plays and their impact on modern society (Zimmerman, 2019). In analysing Shakespeare's works, critics have utilised diverse methodologies and approaches throughout the centuries. Different schools of criticism, such as the Romantic period, placed emphasis on aesthetic qualities, whereas the Freudian school delved into psychological interpretations. This highlights the progressive development of critical readings of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's treatment of gender and sexuality has been a subject of persistent controversy. Characters such as Isabella in "Measure for Measure" resist male oppression by challenging traditional gender roles, whereas others like Ophelia in "Hamlet" adhere to stereotypical gender norms. These divergent perspectives have ignited continuous discussions regarding whether Shakespeare's depictions are progressive or antiquated. In general, the dynamic nature of interpretations and discussions pertaining to Shakespeare's examination of racial conflicts and individuality highlights the lasting intricacy and significance of his creations in mirroring the progression of societal perspectives on race, gender, and identity.

#### **4.3 Influence of cultural and historical contexts on contemporary readings**

The impact of cultural and historical contexts on modern interpretations of Shakespeare's plays is significant, moulding their understanding and interpretation. Shakespeare's works are frequently regarded as enduring classics with universal significance; they serve as symbols of intellectual and cultural capital (Yessler, 2021). Notwithstanding their lack of societal recognition as elite during their lifetime, Shakespeare's plays have withstood the test of time and multiple historical epochs, culminating in a revival during the Romantic Era that elevated them to the status of high-brow literature. Shakespeare's reputation underwent a transformation during the Romantic revival, which served to reinforce his standing as an emblem of affluence and intellectual acumen. Subsequent to this moment, discussions continue to revolve regarding the scope and methodology of Shakespeare instruction within educational systems. Historiographically, the educational aspect of Shakespearean studies has been associated with social mobility and class distinction, reflecting the manner in which his works have been utilised to attain cultural superiority and status. Shakespeare's lasting influence on contemporary culture is evident in his films, dramas, philosophies, and the English language as a whole, in addition to his literary contributions. Many of the terms he coined continue to be utilised today, attesting to the standardisation of literary techniques, vocabulary, and grammar that he implemented and the profound impact he had on the English language and literature. The enduring influence of Shakespearean language in contemporary literature serves to emphasise the immutable nature of his linguistic innovations and his enduring legacy (Dale, 2021). Additionally, throughout various cultures and languages, Shakespeare's impact has been profound, influencing the literary creations of a multitude of novelists, playwrights, and poets, transcending borders and genres.

The continuous stalemates pertaining to the interpretations of Shakespeare's plays serve to underscore the multifaceted nature of his reputation and the wide-ranging reactions to his contentious themes. While there are those who contend that his works are enduring masterpieces that illuminate universal truths concerning the human condition, there are also

those who argue that they have become antiquated and are of no consequence in modern society. Shakespeare's works are subject to ongoing debates that reflect the shifting societal perspectives on historical accuracy, race, gender, and sexuality. These debates revolve around the most effective methods of approaching and interpreting his works in consideration of evolving cultural standards. The controversies that have surrounded the legacy of William Shakespeare have stimulated scholarly examinations that explore the subtleties of his depictions of historical events, gender roles, and sexuality. These analyses challenge conventional interpretations and encourage fresh insights into his literary creations. Overall, the impact of historical and cultural circumstances on modern interpretations of Shakespeare's plays highlights the fluidity of interpretation and modification throughout the course of time. Shakespeare's legacy continues to engender intellectually stimulating dialogues that shed light on the lasting influence of his works on language, literature, and society, encompassing contentions over his relevance, contentiousness, and historical accuracy.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The dramatic works authored by William Shakespeare provide an insight into the pervasive ethnic concerns of the seventeenth century, with a specific focus on racial strife and prejudice. In accordance with the profoundly entrenched racial prejudices of the era, interracial relationships were strictly prohibited by societal norms and regulations. By means of these characters and plots, Shakespeare's works frequently illuminate the intricacies of racism and prejudice. Shakespearean dramatisations frequently explore the theme of etymological colonialism, which involves the use of language to sustain racial discrimination. This is exemplified by characters such as Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice" and Othello, with darker-skinned people being effectively associated with these plays in order to highlight the racial tensions of the time. Shakespeare's dramatic works effectively accentuate racial tensions, thereby reflecting the prevalent social conditions of their era and emphasising their preeminence in the narratives. The examination of racial tensions in the works of Shakespeare reveals the pervasiveness of prejudice and discrimination as thematic elements. To illustrate, "Othello" examines the impact of racism on its characters and narrative by classifying racism into four distinct categories: internalised, individual, passive, and active. The tragic demise of Othello is inextricably intertwined with racial prejudices, serving as a reflection of more pervasive societal perspectives concerning race. Likewise, ethnic tensions are portrayed in "Titus Andronicus" via the titular antagonist Aaron, a Moor. The negative portrayal of Aaron's ethnicity serves as a reflection of the racially prejudicial attitudes prevalent during that time period. The confrontation between dark Germans and white Romans serves to highlight societal prejudices and racial disparities.

"The Tempest" delves into the realm of racial strife by means of the character Caliban, who represents the "other" that was colonised and stands in contrast to Prospero, the coloniser. The liberation struggle of Caliban exemplifies racial conflict emblematically, drawing attention to power disparities and colonial forces within the narrative. Shakespeare explores the ethnic strife that existed between Judaism and Christianity in "The Merchant of Venice," thereby mirroring the tensions that existed between various religious factions. Characters such as Shylock serve as prime examples of the intricate nature of animosities rooted in race and religion, thereby illuminating prevalent societal biases and discriminatory norms. In general,

Shakespeare's examination of racial tensions in his works offers significant perspectives on the ethnic challenges that were widespread in the seventeenth century. Shakespeare presents a nuanced depiction of racism, prejudice, and discrimination through the analysis of characters, narratives, and societal dynamics. This compels audiences to confront these pressing concerns and reevaluate established societal norms and attitudes concerning race.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, specifically through the prism of racial prejudice and discrimination, the plays of William Shakespeare intricately address the ethnic tensions that were prevalent in the seventeenth century. Shakespeare effectively utilises language to portray racial strife, thereby exposing the prevalent social inequities and prejudices of his era. Prominent figures such as Othello, Shylock, Caliban, and Aaron exemplify the animosity and prejudice that characterised the time period. Shakespeare explores the intricate facets of racial tensions in his plays "The Tempest," "Othello," "The Merchant of Venice," and "Titus Andronicus," delving into themes including otherness, colonialism, and societal prejudices. These enduring dramas persistently stimulate contemplation regarding the matter of race and motivate inventive resolutions to tackle ethnic strife in modern society. Through an exploration of the complexities inherent in racial dynamics, Shakespeare's plays provide invaluable perspectives on the human condition and the ongoing pursuit of racial equality.

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