

Othello is one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. It tells the story about the Moor who successfully has adapted to the Venetian culture, becomes a powerful general and marries Desdemona. However, his life and marriage are ruined by the villain, Iago. *Othello* is the only black character in the play. Therefore, his blackness becomes a controversial topic that is still debated in our times, and influences the interpretation of the tragedy in the stage and the study (Neil, 2005, p. 38). In the pages that follow, it will be argued that the interpretation of *Othello*'s blackness is affected by the racist and imperialist attitude of the critics. This will be clarified by critical and performance histories of *Othello*. Moreover, it will be shown that Iago's opening stirs up the ethnical tension. Finally, it will be explained how Iago's manipulation of racism narratives and orientalism make these attitudes appear as central issues of the play.

According to Campbell (2011), the racist and imperialist attitude of the critics have affected their interpretation of *Othello* (p. 9). This is clearly shown in Michael Neil's (2005) article *Othello and Race*, where he gives critical and performance histories of *Othello*. He says that the only surviving account of the performance is by Henry Jackson who saw the performance of the tragedy in the dramatist's life time, in 1610, at Oxford. Jackson mentions the effects of the murder scene, however, he does not make any racial remark about the murderer. Another account is of the mid of the 17th century by Abraham Wright and similarly there is no reference of *Othello*'s color. However, by the end of the seventeenth century, Thomas Rymer derisively attacked the union of *Othello* and Desdemona. He says that the match between a senator's daughter and a "black-amoor" is improper and has "monstrous" nature. Neil reasons that Raymer's attitude towards African is connected to British involvement in the slave trade which rapidly accelerated at the end of seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, however,