Analyzing Intertextual Relations Between Jordan Peele's *Get Out* and Shakespeare's *Othello*

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Abstract:

This paper explores the intertextual elements between Jordan Peele's *Get Out* and Shakespeare's *Othello*. The researcher applies Bazerman's model of intertextuality to examine the similarities and differences between Peele's movie and Shakespeare's play. In comparing *Get Out* to *Othello*, the paper argues that, not only do

both texts centre on an accomplished Black man who is forced to confront the racist assumptions of white society, but it also explores how that white society mobilises stereotypes in order to manipulate and nullify Black agency. From the intertextuality perspective, the paper argues that there are noticeable narrative and thematic parallels in *Get Out* film and *Othello*. Although the selected texts differ in their genre, the geography and period of time where and when they were produced, they manifest similar events and themes. The American movie *Get Out* surfaces such themes of racial stereotyping and treachery much like how *Othello* exposes these themes. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate how Peele recontextualises and reconfigures the racial dynamics of Shakespeare's *Othello* in the so-called "post-racial" America and how he positions himself in relation to these racial issues. An intertextual reading of the two selected texts will widen the scope of understanding each of these aspects and reveal how intertextuality works between these two literary pieces.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *Othello*, Jordan Peele, *Get Out*, intertextuality, race, genre.

Introduction

This research paper explores the reconfiguration of race in Jordan Peele's film *Get Out* and its intertextual links to Shakespeare's *Othello*. It aims to scrutinise the intertextual relation between the two texts. The paper is a comparative analysis of the two texts in light of intertextuality. The descriptive method is used in this paper where the researcher applies Bazerman's model of intertextuality to examine the similarities and differences between Shakespeare's *Othello* and Peele's *Get Out*. Comparing *Get Out* to *Othello*, the paper argues that, not only do both texts centre on an accomplished Black man who is forced to confront the racist assumptions of white society, but it also explores how that white society mobilises stereotypes in order to manipulate and nullify Black agency. The

paper examines the narrative and thematic overlaps between the two texts and demonstrates how Peele recontextualises the racial dynamics of Shakespeare's play.

Methodology

The researcher uses the descriptive method and applies Bazerman's model of intertextuality. The data of this research is collected from the script of Peele's film and Shakespeare's *Othello* by taking steps such as watching the movie and the play, reading the script and subtitles, identifying selected data, classifying the data based on the relevance, and selecting the classified data that are relevant and appropriate to answer the problem statements. Afterward, the researcher analyses the data by applying the related theory.

The comparative method the researcher uses in this paper owes much to the American School of Comparative Literature rather than to the French School of comparativism. The American school shifts its theorizing from the areas of concern that characterized French outlook and methods of analysis namely the influence of a book, an author, or the literature of a country on another national literature to literariness and subject matter. According to Wellek such studies elaborated by the French School of Comparative Literature "do not permit us to analyze and judge an individual work of art, or even to consider the complicated whole of its genesis; […] The emphasis of 'comparative literature' thus conceived is on externals; and the decline of this type of 'comparative literature' in recent decades reflects the general turning away from stress on mere 'facts,' on sources and influences" (48). As a result, the stress on influence transmission, translation, intermediaries, reviews and all sorts of relation and extra literary considerations, which form the core of French comparative studies, are not the focus of this paper. The focus, instead, is on the various treatments of a subject matter by the authors and on comparison and contrast, distinctions and commonalities between the two selected texts.

Theoretical Framework: Intertextuality

The act of reading rather than interpretation of one work engages the reader in discovering a network of textual relations. Tracing those relations is in fact interpreting the text that is discovering its meanings. So, reading becomes a process of "touring between texts" (Simandan). In *Intertextuality*, Graham Allen writes "meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations" (1). Intertextuality is a literary device that creates an interrelationship between texts. It is the point where two literary texts overlap. This overlap generates related understanding in separate works.

Despite the generic differences between works of art and literary texts, there are always intersections between texts which have been written in different periods of time. Difference in time might tell which text reflects the influence of the other one. Authors who deliberately or unintentionally incorporate ideas from a previous text in their own texts intend to convey certain meanings and messages to the readers. When the readers recognize these intertextual references/intersections, they make connections between the contemporary text and the original one. Therefore, intertextuality, in its general and broad meaning, refers to texts that are interrelated or interconnected in terms of character, plot, context, theme, and structure or any other means. These intertextual relations, which authors utilize to communicate their ideas, may come in different forms such as allusions.

There are countless examples of authors borrowing, knowingly and directly, from Shakespeare. Intertextuality is the way in which any work of art purposely or accidentally connects and intersects with other texts. When I watched Peele's film *Get Out*, it brought to my mind Shakespeare's play *Othello*, which I studied as a student and taught as a teacher of English Literature. The film and the play share clear narrative overlaps, which will be analysed and discussed in this paper. "Examining texts "intertextually" means looking for "traces,"

the bits and pieces of text which writers and speakers borrow and sew together to create a new discourse. The most mundane manifestation of intertextuality is explicit citation but intertextuality animates all discourse and goes beyond mere citation" (Porter 34). This paper will develop a thematic analysis of the intertextual connections between Peele's film *Get Out* and Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Intertextuality is a concept coined by the linguist Kristeva in her seminal work of intertextuality Word, Dialogue and Novel. Her notion of intertextuality refers to the effective and literal presence of traces in a text of another text. Kristeva argues that all works of literature/art being produced contemporarily are intertextual with the previously written works. "[A]ny text," she argues, "is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (66) The concept of intertextuality can also be expanded to film and other types of art. According to Kristeva, any text can be considered a work of intertextuality because it builds on the structures of previous texts. These intertextual interrelationships include but they are not limited to narrative and thematic overlaps, plot lines, allusions, parodies, and names. The meaning in a text is, therefore, understood in relation to the meanings conveyed by other texts that predated it. For this reason, there will always be some degree of thematic, structural, ideological overlaps between texts.

The most important thinkers and literary theorists agree that intertextuality is a set of relations between texts which may include direct quotations, allusions, imitations, literary conventions, and parody among others. This paper uses Bazerman's perspective on intertextuality to analyse the intertextual overlaps between Peele's film *Get Out* and Shakespeare's *Othello*. According to Bazerman, there are six different levels at which a text invokes another text. The six levels are 'prior texts as a source of meaning to be used at face value', 'explicit social dramas of prior texts engaged in discussion', 'background, support, and contrast', 'beliefs, issues,

ideas, statements generally circulated', 'recognizable kinds of language, phrasing and genre', and 'resources of language' (86-88).

Bazerman argues that these levels of intertextuality can be identified through certain techniques that represent words of others. Some of these techniques are explicit such as 'direct quotation' and 'indirect quotation', 'mentioning of a person, document, or statements' and 'comment or evaluation on a statement, text, or otherwise invoked voice'; while others are implicit like 'using recognizable phrasing, terminology associated with specific people or groups of people or particular document' and 'using language and forms that seem to echo certain ways of communicating, discussions among other people, types of documents' (88-89). Bazerman proposes the following procedures for analysing intertextuality. First, the researcher creates a list of all instances of intertextuality in the text in order to evaluate the material as relevant, then he or she lists how those instances are expressed through evaluating the degree of textual integration (i.e. whether it is through a direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrase or description), after that, the researcher identifies whether they are attributed to some person or source, and finally he or she interprets the intertextuality by commenting on how or for what purpose the intertextual elements are being used in the text.

Although intertextuality "is now a widely recognized phenomenon, there is not a standard shared analytic vocabulary for considering the elements and kinds of intertextuality" (Bazerman 86). For Fairclough, intertextuality "points to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones" (270). The main concern of intertextuality is with how texts are written in relation to predated texts.

Purpose of the Study

Having introduced the notion of intertextuality coupled with Bazerman's approach to intertextual analysis, this paper attempts to uncover the traces of intertextuality in Peele's film *Get Out* and

Shakespeare's play *Othello*. The researcher's primary objective is to analyse Peele's film based on Bazerman's perspective on intertextuality in efforts to arrive at conclusions regarding Peele's use of intertextuality as a means of assisting the readers in their interpretation and comprehension of the major underlying themes of race and racism. Aside from that, the researcher aims at analysing the intertextual overlaps found within Peele's *Get Out* to shed light on how he recontextualises, reorients and reconfigures *Othello*'s racial dynamics.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this paper is as follows: (1) What are the aspects of intertextuality in Peele's *Get Out*? (2) How *Get Out* recontextualises Shakespeare's *Othello* and reconfigures its racial dynamics?

Literature Review

To sum up, the research aim of this paper is to examine how Peele draws on Shakespeare's *Othello* for scripting his text, how he reconfigures and recontextualises the racial dynamics of the play and how he positions himself, as a scripter and director of the film *Get Out*, in relation to *Othello* to develop his own ideas about race and racism in America in the twenty-first century. In fact, the originality and craft of Peele come from how he recontextualises Shakespeare's text in a new way to fit the context of the purported "post-racial" America.

Numerous studies have been carried out in relation to Peele's film *Get Out* revealing its use of the mechanics of the horror genre to expose real but often masked racism in the professedly liberal post-racial America (Landsberg). Some researchers have investigated Peele's depiction of the white terror exercised on the black body (K.L. Henry) while other studies expand on the concepts of the Sunken Place and the Coagula as symbols of the colonization of the black bodies (Dianne; Da Silva; Corredera). Some other scholars

examined Peele's manipulation of stereotypes and horror clichés to criticise Post-racial White liberalism (Boger).

Dawn Keetley's new edited collection, entitled *Jordan Peele's Get Out: Political Horror* examines Peele's *Get Out* from different perspectives. The collection brings together sixteen diverse essays, each offering a fresh and insightful perspective on the film, its themes and contexts. Some essays have examined the generic features of the film comparing it to gothic fiction/genre. Linnie Blake, for instance, studied Peele's use of a number of the narrative and aesthetic tropes of the Female Gothic to reflect uniquely African-American experiences, while simultaneously refusing to feminise the film's protagonist and Sarah Ilott examined the gothic elements in the movie and how they serve as an ideal form through which to critique structural and systemic racism.

Adam Lowenstein locates *Get Out* within the broader horror tradition, exploring its links to texts as diverse as Victor Halperin's White Zombie (1932), and the horror novels of Ira Levin. Keetley contextualises the film within an established canon of political horror, in which black bodies are stripped of their agencies. Other critics engage with the politics of *Get Out*, analysing how the film offers a rigorous yet nuanced critique of racist institutions and ideologies. Gaines, for example, explores *Get Out*'s engagement with W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of 'double consciousness' and Coleman and Lawrence show how *Get Out* renders monstrous the 'Whitopia' – a predominantly white space valued for its homogeneity and exclusivity. Casey explores the textual and conceptual links between *Get Out* and earlier zombie films like White Zombie and Murphy offers an engaging analysis of the role of space in *Get Out*, examining how the film restructures suburbia as a site of Black anxiety, and reconfigures the cinematic tropes of the 'backwoods-horror' subgenre.

Other researchers engage in a subtle shift away from generic, formal, and literary concerns, and towards the real-world inequalities and abuses that produced *Get Out*, and the context of

unrelenting violence into which the film was ultimately released. They have investigated a wide variety of interconnected themes such as *Get Out*'s fantastical reconfiguration of the slave revolt. For instance, Lauro studied the way *Get Out*'s story of 'capture, occupation, and revolt' re-enacts the historical trauma of the transatlantic slave trade and revisits some of the diverse strategies of resistance performed by enslaved peoples in the US (149). Tinnin investigated the entanglements of spatialized racial-sexual violence, conceptualizations of black female subjectivity. She argued that the film and its articulation of the afterlife of slavery fails to account for gender by tangentially engaging black women in its dissection of race and racism. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous research has addressed intertextuality in Peele's film *Get Out* by adopting intertextuality as a theoretical framework for analysis. Such a gap was evident through searching the literature relevant to intertextuality analysis in film; hence, this paper aims at filling this gap.

Material and Method

In this section, the researcher exposes the material selected for analysis as well as lay out the methodology for carrying out the analysis. Peele's film *Get Out* and Shakespeare's play *Othello* were chosen as the material for this research paper. The researcher uses both the script of *Get Out* and the film for quotations. The choice is made because of the noticeable intertextual overlaps between the two texts. The analysis of the two texts will mainly focus on the intertextual narrative and the thematic overlaps between them and the way Peele's *Get Out* recontextualises and reconfigures the racial dynamics of Shakespeare's *Othello*. *Get Out* surfaces the themes of racism and treachery much like how *Othello* exposes these qualities in men. An intertextual reading of both literary texts will widen the scope of understanding each of these aspects and reveal how Peele's film re-rights the representation of race in Shakespeare's play and how he subverts the trope of the innocent, virginal white woman and the lascivious moor.

To answer the research questions, the researcher uses Bazerman's method of analysing intertextuality found in Peele's film *Get Out*. The researcher created a list of the noted thematic instances of intertextuality in both texts; evaluated the degree of textual integration (how the intertextuality was expressed i.e. direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrase, or description); and finally interpreted each instance of intertextuality in addition to stating its purpose. The paper intends to highlight the way echoes of Shakespeare's *Othello* can be felt while reading the script or watching the film *Get Out*. In the postmodern era where no text is considered original and where texts are believed to be imitations with difference of some predated texts, it is important to see that writers belonging to different geographical areas and different periods of time are influenced by each other's work and they incorporate this influence in their works either to assert or to subvert certain meanings. In this case Peele who wanted to articulate his understanding of the racial dynamics in the purported post-racial America has created a transformative work of art that crafts a similar story to Shakespeare's *Othello* but a story that is understood through a very different racial perspective and one that privileges blackness instead of whiteness.

Intertextual Narrative Overlaps

Peele's *Get Out* film is an example of intertextuality: its plot is based on and retells Shakespeare's *Othello*. The main characters are Chris, Rod, Rose, the Armitages/ Rose's parents (Dean and Missy), Walter and Georgiana. The film evokes Shakespearean storyline, characters and themes. Shakespeare's play is about a black general who marries a white Venetian woman named Desdemona who defies her father Brabantio and her white society. Othello chooses Micheal Cassio as his lieutenant over his ensign Iago who claims to be better qualified in warfare than him. Therefore, Iago plans to put Cassio in trouble and ruin Othello. He tricks Othello in believing that his wife is cheating on him with Cassio. Othello is now convinced that Desdemona betrays him and has become so jealous,

enraged and mentally devastated. It further leads him to strangulate his wife. Only after her death does Othello recognises that Desdemona is innocent and Iago is the root of all evils. In the end, Othello kills himself and Iago ends up in legal custody.

Peele's *Get Out* recounts the tale of an African-American Chris who is dating a white girlfriend named Rose. The latter invited him for a weekend to visit her family for the first time. Chris feels so anxious because Rose's parents are unaware that he is black but she assures him that they are liberal, enlightened and anti-racists. During the visit, Chris feels nervous when he meets Walter and Georgina the Armitages' friendly, but odd, black help. His apprehension increases after the psychologist Missy Armitage hypnotises him to help him quit smoking. As the film progresses, the audience realise that the Armitages have an elaborate plan to strip Chris of his bodily autonomy and to literally remove his agency through the Coagula procedures, which entail a brain-swapping surgery that gives a white buyer control over a new black body, forcing the former to watch from "The Sunken Place" without being able to respond. This surgery allows an aging or physically ailing white person to live on. Chris miraculously escapes, murdering the Armitages in the process, including Rose, whom he strangles minutes before his friend, Rod rescues him.

A comparative analysis of Shakespeare's *Othello* and Peele's *Get Out* reveals that both texts lay bare how the Venetians and the Armitages respectively, as representative of the dominant white society, use stereotypes to control, manipulate, and appropriate the minds and bodies of black people. Therefore, we see these two isolated black heroes striving to retain their own agency. Both texts narrate, each in its own way, a tragic and horrific story of an interracial romance gone wrong. Othello navigates, in racial isolation, the white Venetian society. Similarly, Chris seems to be the only black man among the white Armitages. Both Othello and Chris are tied to the Venetians and the Armitages through the white women they love. These white societies seem to be open-minded,

tolerant of racial differences, and liberal in appearance, but in reality, they are bloody racists.

When Brabantio heard the news of Desdemona marrying Othello, he freaks out, calls up his servants to hunt down Othello, and demands that Othello be put to death. Then, he disowns Desdemona. He reacts to his daughter's interracial *marriage* with shock and disbelief and he harbours racial prejudices towards *Othello thinking that he* has bewitched *his daughter*. Similarly, Jeremy, Rose's brother, "can't bond with the guy" dating his sister. Unlike Desdemona, Rose plays an active role in luring Chris for her family's experiments, which brings in the issue of miscegenation and the fear of black men violating white women. The threat of miscegenation is the hidden nightmare in both texts, and it cannot be overcome by arguments about virtue or service to the state.

Service to the White Society

Like Othello, Walter and Georgina are used in the service of whiteness. Othello's service to Venice during its imperial wars finds its limit when the threat of miscegenation looms. Although Walter's and Georgina's services to the Armitages in Peele's film differ from those of Othello in Shakespeare's play, the way these characters put an end to their services remains similar. Like Othello, Walter sees suicide as the only way to free himself from his enslavement by the white society, in this case, the Armitages and the American society as well. Hughes argues that Walter's death recalls "the tradition of Blacula in the sense that his character dies through an act of suicide rather than murder" (38). Unlike Othello's suicide, which is read by Corredera as a "confrontation of his racial marginalization by Iago and his strategic use by the white Venetian state", (7) Walter's death can be read as a reclamation of his autonomy which had been stripped from him by Roman. Using Walter as the groundskeeper and Georgina as the housekeeper in *Get Out* recalls the tradition of using black individuals to service the estates of the white upper-class of the South following emancipation. Their domestic and

physical labors at Dean's and Missy's mansion recalls the slaves'
labor at a plantation-era home.

Thematic Intertextuality: Race and Racism

Another overarching theme that binds Peele's *Get Out* and
Shakespeare's *Othello* together is racism. As discussed above,
Peele's film involves similar basic relationships as those in *Othello*,
but the setting has been transported to a contemporary American
setting. Peele uses Shakespeare's play to recontextualise the
dominant social racial issue of racism. Othello's manipulation
through racial stereotypes is also evident in the manipulation of
Chris in Peele's film. The table below shows similar racist
comments from both texts.

Table 1 Explicit Racism

Othello	*Get Out*
"Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe." (1.1.112). "you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse…you'll have your nephews neigh to you." (1.1.7) "A horned man's a monster, and a beast" (4, 1, 62) Iago: "I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs." (1.1.116-117) "If virtue no delighted beauty lack, Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.'" (1.3.22) "My name, that was as fresh As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black as mine own face." (3.3.54) "the blacker devil!" (5.2.36)	"JEREMY You've had your chance. He's dating my sister. I can't bond with the guy? Dean exhales." (32) "JEREMY Cause, with your frame, your genetic make-up? If you pushed your body, I mean really trained, you'd be a beast." (33) "CHRIS (CONT'D) Do they know I'm black? Rose is taken aback by the question." (8) "PARKER The world cares, April. But it's not a question of physical superiority, it's "What skin color is more culturally advantageous?" (49) "PARKER Fairer skin is has been in favor' the last couple of thousands of years, but the pendulum has swung back again hasn't it..?" (50)

The above given quotations explicitly deal with the theme of race and racism which is prevalent in the two narratives. The racial issues, which are at the heart of Shakespeare's *Othello* find echoes in Peele's *Get Out*. In Shakespeare's play, racist comments come from the Venetian characters namely Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio. This racist portrayal denotes Othello's blackness and foreignness. In their provocation of Brabantio, by informing him about Desdemona's marriage to and elopement with Othello, Iago and Roderigo use an extremely unpleasant animalistic sexual imagery. Iago suggests to Brabantio that his daughter is deflowered by Othello, the leader of the Venetian army "an old black ram/ Is tupping your white ewe" (*Othello* 1.1.88-9). Othello's and Desdemona's interracial marriage is depicted as a mating of two animals. Othello's race is connected, through the use of metaphor, with rampant sexuality, blackness and evil.

The racial issues which are at the core of Shakespeare's play are explicitly stated. For instance, Roderigo refers to Othello as "the thick lips". This singles out one prominent characteristic of Othello's foreignness and black heritage. It displays a racial distrust of Othello based on his color. Roderigo and Iago are not the only characters to display racism when referring to Othello. Desdemona's father too uses very public micro-assaults against Othello. Racism is a pervasive theme within the work, spreading misconceptions and lies about Othello by tying him to incorrect stereotypes. Similarly, Peele's *Get Out* reflects the same discourse of racism but discusses it from different viewpoints.

The horror in Peele's film is fixated on the everyday forms of racism and violence against people of color performed by white people. Like Othello, Chris experiences different forms of what Corredera calls racial "microaggressions" (8). The Armitages and their friends use such racial microaggressions to marginalize Chris and to remind him of his blackness while fetishizing it. Chris is othered and described as an outsider navigating in isolation the Armitages' mansion.

Among the film's numerous allusions to racism – the policeman's unwarranted request for Chris's ID after a car accident even though he was not driving; the Armitages' employment of only black help;– Dean's description of Chris's romantic relationship with Rose as a "thang" and his continuous call of him as "my man", Rose's brother's assessment of Chris's inherent athletic abilities by describing him as "a beast" (Peele 33), the Greens' discussion of Tiger Woods with him, Lisa's squeeze of Chris's arm and pecs, asking, "is it true? The love making. Is it better? (Peele 49) Is it [sex with a black man] better?", and Jim's referencing of the fact that "Black [skin color] is in fashion" (Peele 90).

Jeremy's claims that with Chris's "genetic makeup," he could "be a fucking beast" if he trained hard enough recalls Iago's calling Othello "a Barbary horse" making "the beast with two backs". For the Venetian society Othello is valued for his ability to fight and win wars against enemies. Similarly, for the Armitages Chris's value lies in his physical ability in street fighting and sports. The Armitages and their guests are obsessed with Chris's physical body. The common denominator in all the above quotations about race resides in the fact that the Venetians and the Armitages resort to animal imagery to describe the black protagonists Othello and Chris. Jeremy's earlier characterization of Chris as a potential "beast" in the wrestling arena recalls Iago's description of Othello as a horned man making "the beast with two backs" (*Othello* 1.1.116-117). Through these connections, we see how this film uses strong intertextuality to explore the theme of racism.

Both texts use the black body as a site of colonization. Like Iago in *Othello*, the Armitages and their guests in *Get Out* seek influence over Chris's body and mind. A comparative analysis of the two texts reveals that both narratives lay bare how the evil forces within the dominant white society use stereotypes to manipulate and appropriate the black mind and body, engaging the two black protagonists Othello and Chris in a battle to retain their own agency.

Iago hypnotises Othello by filling his mind with thoughts of
Desdemona's alleged betrayal and promiscuity. Othello experiences
paralysis and loss of speech when he becomes convinced of his
wife's adultery. Iago torments Othello with vivid descriptions of
Desdemona's alleged sexual activity. Othello falls into an epileptic
seizure and loses consciousness—a fact that allows Iago to celebrate
the way his own toxic verbal "medicine" has allowed him to poison
Othello's mind and undermine the reputation of the virtuous
Desdemona. As Othello "falls in a trance," Iago casts himself as
psychiatrist, proclaiming, "Work on, / My medicine, work! Work
on, My medicine, work! Thus, credulous fools are caught," (*Othello*
4.1.53–54).

According to Cefalu, Iago's power over Othello results from the
latter's inability to read Iago and it is linked to hypnotism and
mindreading:

> *Iago's evil seems to lie in his talent for what cognitive
> theorists would describe as mind reading, the relative ability
> to access imaginatively another's mental world and, in
> Iago's case, to manipulate cruelly that world. Inversely
> proportional to Iago's mind-reading ability would be the
> mindblindness or at least metacognitive deficits of Othello,
> who seems too obtuse and closed off from others to fathom
> Iago's unimaginable designs. (265)*

In the same line of thought, Pescetti in his article Iago's Word and
Sword describes Iago "as a hypnotist: […] Hypnotism, when
utilized in such circumstances, taps into one of the most
mysteriously powerful human traits: will. Iago, by means of speech,
is able to hypnotize Othello" (7).

As a hypnotherapist, Missy Armitage attempts to control Chris's
mind and body by hypnotizing him. Missy and Iago play similar
roles using tangible object the teacup and the spoken word to control
Chris's and Othello's minds respectively. By means of linguistic
imperialism, Iago manipulates, controls and converts Othello's mind
to self-hatred by filling his head with white society's stereotypes of
black men, and so dictates Othello's actions. Similarly, in *Get Out*,

Missy hypnotises Chris preparing him for the Coagula cult's brain transplant procedure which will fill his black body with the thoughts of a white man and lock his consciousness in "the sunken place," which is the crevice of the mind where Chris would become a prisoner in his own body.

Like Iago**,** Missy hypnotises Chris by pretending to help cure his childhood trauma like a therapist would. Chris becomes so angry and shouts at Jim Hudson "You hypnotize me? Break my will.? Make me a slave like the others? This is some crazy racist shit" (Peele 88). This is the moment when Chris learns that Hudson plans to get his brain transplanted into his body. When Missy hypnotises Chris, his consciousness descends into the sunken place and his body becomes paralysed and he agitates in silence.

Recontextualizing *Othello* in *Get Out*

Peele takes Shakespeare's *Othello* as a source he draws on and as a text that is widely circulated or accepted. He uses Shakespeare's text to establish basic background and support for the claims he makes. He uses *Othello* as an intertextual source to construct his own arguments, to reconfigure and recontextualise the racial dynamics of Shakespeare's play. In this paper, the main purpose for conducting the intertextual analysis is not only to investigate how Peele, in his film, draws on Shakespeare's play *Othello* for scripting his movie but also to examine how he positions himself, as writer and director of *Get Out*, in relation to *Othello*.

Fairclough states that "intertextuality is a matter of recontextualization" (51). According to Linell, recontextualization can be defined as the "dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context […] to another" (154). Recontextualization can be relatively explicit—for example, when one text directly quotes another—or relatively implicit—as when the "same" generic meaning is rearticulated across different texts (Oddo). Intertextuality opens up difference by bringing various other 'voices' into a text.

Recontextualisation is a process that extracts text, signs or meaning from its original context and reuses it in another context. Since the meaning of texts, signs and content is dependent on its context, recontextualization implies a change of meaning and redefinition (Connolly 377). Peele recontextualises Shakespeare's Othello by reconfiguring its racial dynamics in the twenty-first century. In Corredera's words, Get Out "reorient[s] how we conceive of Othello's racial dynamics to imagine more ethically the play and its racial representation in the 21st century" (1). Corredera's argument about Peele's reorienting of the racial framework in Get out is illuminating because this recontextualising of the racial issue places blame for Othello's "savage" and violent responses not on his blackness, but rather on the physiological and psychological microaggressions enacted upon him by white supremacy. If read in this way both Othello and Chris do not murder Desdemona and the Armitages respectively because they are black men who innately turn to extreme violence; rather, the unremitting racist microaggressions they are subject to take both psychological and physical tolls on them as a black men trigger self-defensive violence.

Using the language of physiognomy, Corredera argues that these microaggressions reflect the real, recurrent, racial stress imposed upon Othello and Chris, that disrupts their cognitions, creates paranoia, and fosters rage and belligerence. The violation of Othello's and Chris's well-being through microaggressions does not need to excuse their murderous reactions as Corredera argues; however, it explains their resort to violence by the racism they suffered from and by placing the blame on whiteness instead of blackness (12)

Peele's recontextualization of Shakespeare's text does not only lie in his reconfiguration of race and his characterization of Chris and Rose as opposed to Othello and Desdemona but also in his Challenging of the dominant representations of black people in American movies and in Western literature in general. Peele created

"a movie that served the black audience, which has never had this type of representation […] a movie where a black guy kills a white family at the end, and everyone cheers for him" (Kilday). Indeed, Peele's *Get Out* overturns various representational tropes by creating a horror film where it is the black protagonist who is the celebrated survivor at the end rather than the white characters.

Peele does not only recontextualise Shakespeare's *Othello* by reconfiguring its racial dynamics but also by making a generic shift from tragedy to horror in fictive representations of interracial relationships, by depicting racism in a purportedly postracial society, and by rehabilitating the black stereotypical image. Instead of representing Chris as an idiotic character that dies right away, *Get Out* twists the horror stereotype on its head, making Chris one of the smartest characters in the film. Peele recontextualization of Shakespeare's play demonstrates the power of representation and importance of perspective and reconstruction.

The characterization of Chris and Rose differs from Shakespeare's characterization of Othello and Desdemona. Chris is not the gullible Othello and Rose is not the innocent Desdemona. In *Get Out*, Peele consciously subverts the trope of the innocent, virginal white woman and the "lascivious moor" or the black man who is overcome with violent sexual desire for a white woman. Peele's recontextualization of Shakespeare's *Othello* is an intertextual imitation with difference because he added his own twists to the storyline and the characterisation of his black characters. One major difference between Desdemona and Chris's girlfriend Rose is that the former is innocent and faithful to Othello while the latter is revealed, towards the end of the movie, to be a sociopath who sexually tempts black men and women to strip them of their bodily autonomies through the surgical procedures performed by the Coagula, which embodies both the process of dehumanization of black subjects and the ultimate exercise of white dominance over them. Another major difference between Shakespeare's tragedy and Peele's horror movie is Chris's recognition of the true nature of

Rose who was part of an elaborate plan to strip Chris of his bodily autonomy and to literally remove his agency through the Coagula procedures.

Get Out's hero Chris possess such heroic traits: a successful photographer, a loving and caring boyfriend; a resilient survivor in the face of trauma (his mother's death) and the Armitages' racism. Unlike Othello's "error of judgment" (his hamartia), in listening to "Honest Iago" and believing his wife's infidelity, (*Othello*, 1.3.336) Chris has strong doubts about Missy's practice of hypnosis and Rose's involvement in the coagula plan towards the end of the film. Chris makes an error of judgment when he ignores Rod's advice of not accepting Rose's invitation to visit her parents and spend the weekend with them. However, he becomes so suspicious of Rose and her family towards the end of the film.

While Othello's tragedy is based on wrong suspicions, Chris's horror is based on correct doubts which prove the racial anxieties Rod voiced in the beginning of the film. (Byron And Perrello 31) Chris's near-strangulation of Rose recalls Othello's smothering of Desdemona. The name of Chris's girlfriend Rose recalls Othello's comparing Desdemona and her supposed infidelity to a flower that would continue to trick men unless he kills it. Othello says, "When I have plucked the rose, / I cannot give it vital growth again" (*Othello* 5.2.13–15). Othello is so convinced of Desdemona's infidelity that he believes that if he doesn't kill her, she would continue to do the same to other men. Similarly, Chris's strangulation of Rose shows his fears that she will continue to sexually lure black men to be victims to the coagula process. Therefore, Rose turns to be Peele's evil Desdemona.

The juxtaposition of Shakespeare's *Othello*, which is a Renaissance tragedy, and Peele's *Get Out*, which is a twenty-first-century horror film, "illuminates the relationship between tragedy and horror, as the false messages, mis-readings, and imagined evils that drive the tragic hero in *Othello* become actual, violent realities in the modern horror of *Get Out*" (Byron And Perrello 24). This generic shift from

tragedy to horror film impacts the way Peele recontextualises and reconfigures race and racism in the purportedly Post-racial America. Peele's horror film turns Othello's internal psychological suffering into the physical destruction of Chris's body. Byron and Perrello chart the generic shift from tragedy to horror in fictive representations of interracial relationships. Their discussion of this generic shift from tragedy to horror is very illuminating and it serves the purpose of this paper. They argue that, not only do *Get Out* and *Othello*, focus on an accomplished black man who is forced to confront the racist microaggressions of white society, but they also investigate how that white society mobilises stereotypes in order to manipulate black people and to literally nullify Black agency (24).

According to Byron and Perrello Othello's suffering is psychological, born from his racial anxieties and doubts about Desdemona. His internal and psychological suffering is caused by abstract threats. However, Chris's suffering is physical (strangled, stabbed through the hand, tied to a chair, and forced to undergo the coagula process). His suffering is caused by real and external threats experienced physically. Therefore, *Get Out* actualizes the fears that the tragic hero imagines and misinterprets (24). The threat to Othello's agency, represented by Iago and his manipulative stereotypes, is a predominantly psychological without tangible form. The threat to Chris's agency, however, is predominantly physical because the Armitages intend to literally remove his brain and take control of his body using a hypnotic technique reliant on a very real teacup/tangible object.

Conclusion

The main aim of this paper is to investigate the intertextuality between Peele's *Get Out* film and Shakespeare's *Othello* within the framework of Bazermen's model of intertextuality. The paper finds that there are visible similarities in some events between the selected texts. It is observed that some thematic patterns directly refer to the play *Othello*. After comparing Peele's film and Shakespeare's play

in the light of intertextuality, one can safely argue that the two texts share some thematic and narrative overlaps.

Although *Get Out* contains no traces of direct and indirect quotations from Shakespeare's *Othello*, Peele's intertextuality can be categorized as a description or paraphrasing. *Get Out*'s scripter and director follows the same storyline and tackles the same themes of racism, miscegenation, and treachery. Both texts depict a romantic relationship which has gone wrong between black men (Chris and Othello) and white women (Rose and Desdemona) and they reveal the racism that the two black protagonists have suffered from as they navigate in isolation the Armitages and the Venetian white societies respectively. Race and racism are the dominant and central themes in both texts. The paper argues that Peele's film is a thematic intertext of Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Get Out recontextualises, reconfigures, and reorients the racial dynamics of *Othello* in a new way to fit the context of the professedly "post-racial" America. Peele's text takes Chris/the black man out of the Sunken place where Othello has been residing since the play was written. Peele is critical of the way black characters are represented in mainstream American culture and media as well as in Shakespeare's text. He departs from Shakespeare's representation of Othello by making Chris, the colonized black protagonist, reclaim his identity and agency through revolutionary violence, which is according to Fanon the only possible way for authentic decolonization and liberation. (20) Compromise, negotiation and gentleness are not viable options, for the white/colonizers and the black/colonized are "congenitally antagonistic" (Fanon 2) to each other. Therefore, we watch Chris murder the entire Armitage family at the end of the film, including the black people whom they have transplanted with the brain of Rose's grandmother and grandfather and transformed into "white" marionettes, as they try to impede his escape.

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