

# Common Values in the Community of a Shared Future

## -- A Case Study of *Othello*

Xinwen Xu, Xue Yang, Chi Huang\*

School of Foreign Languages, Chengdu University of Information Technology, 610225, China

### ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare, known as the "Zeus on Mount Olympus of human literature", has created a vast cultural treasure trove and a valuable spiritual heritage for the later generations. Taking *Othello*, one of Shakespeare's four great tragedies, as an example, this paper conducts a research on the social concepts such as racial discrimination, stereotyped thinking, human morality and other related issues in this work, and explores the common values reflected therein. Based on the research, this paper draws the conclusion that even under different ideologies, all countries in the world should bear the responsibility of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

### KEYWORDS

A Community with a Shared Future; Common Values; Shakespeare; *Othello*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Othello* is one of Shakespeare's four greatest tragedies. Othello is a general of the Duchy of Venice, and he falls in love with Desdemona, the daughter of a senior statesman. Because Othello is a black man, the marriage is not permitted, and the two have to marry secretly. Othello has a sinister companion, an ensign named Iago, who is bent on getting rid of Othello. He tries his best to sow discord between Othello and Desdemona by falsely accusing another deputy Cassio and Desdemona have an affair. Othello takes it for true and chokes his wife in anger. When he learns the truth, he draws his sword in remorse to commit suicide, lying beside Desdemona.

In Shakespeare's works, the destiny of human is an important theme. And *Othello* is one of the works full of cross-cultural commonalities. The discussion of *Othello* shows how Shakespeare takes the community with a shared future for mankind as the center to explore the complexity of human nature and the injustice of society. In the face of cultural differences, Othello's story can also spread and resonate in different regions, conveying universal values. This paper will deeply analyze the cross-cultural conflicts and common values in *Othello*, and explore its reflection and enlightenment on the community with a shared future for mankind.

In the context of the new era, readers should pay more attention to the exploration of humanity and the conflicts or integration reflected in *Othello*, actively promote global cultural exchanges, and practice the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. In-depth analyses of this work can help people draw wisdom from it and provide base for the building of an international order of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom.

## 2. RECOLLECTION OF HUMANISTIC THOUGHTS

As one of the greatest dramatists in the history of English literature, Shakespeare was always concerned with the universalities of mankind. In his plays, people from different countries and classes might face similar challenges and fates. This display of cross-cultural commonalities makes Shakespeare's works not only widely popular in the UK and even around the world, but also resonates in different cultural ages.

In Shakespeare's plays, the spirit of humanism is embodied in all aspects. Whether they are about love, jealousy, betrayal, lust, power, family, or friendship, Shakespeare's works reveal the deepest emotions and conflicts of the human heart in their own unique ways. These works vividly and incisively show the profound insight into human nature, the concern for human personality, the maintenance of human dignity, the opposition to discrimination, and the pursuit of equality. In addition, the emphasis on human value is also reflected in the thinking of values such as morality and justice. Through the struggle and conflict between different characters, Shakespeare reveals the confusion of human beings in moral choice and ethical concept. This kind of profound exploration of values makes Shakespeare's works have universal significance beyond times and cultures.

Othello is a giant image with humanistic thoughts produced in the Renaissance era. However, Iago is an extremely egoistic schemer who emerged in the period of primitive accumulation of capital. In Iago, there is both the greed and cunning of the bourgeoisie, and the ferocity and wickedness of the feudal class. He does not believe that there are sincere feelings in the world, and believes that there is only greed and lust in the world. He describes the pure love that the humanists see as the embodiment of a happy life as "physical stimulation and unrestrained lust." What's more, Desdemona is a noble woman who is brave, pure, kind and full of humanistic ideals, embodying the pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty<sup>[1]</sup>.

## 3. EMBRACEMENT CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Different cultural backgrounds bring different ways of thoughts and values, and these differences may have a direct or indirect impact on people's social interaction, emotional communication, behavior choice and other aspects. For example, in East Asian culture, emphasis is placed on family and stability, and people tend to think and act in a way that is more inclined to keep harmony, and avoid conflicts. While in Western culture, people pay more attention to the values of independence, freedom, individuality and competition. Such differences will affect people's career choices, love and marriage, education concepts, rights and obligations and other aspects.

Although Othello has been in a high position, he still can't get rid of the exclusion and discrimination of the mainstream culture of Venice. However, at this time, the beautiful Desdemona appears, as the daughter of a senior statesman, the symbol of authority, she is deeply loved by the Venetians. It can be said that she is an embodiment of mainstream culture. For Othello, who is eager to seek cultural identity, to be loved by such a noble and beautiful white girl as Desdemona is the affirmation and acceptance of mainstream culture. From a certain level, Desdemona's admiration for him is a kind of redemption for him<sup>[2]</sup>.

In the play, the love between Othello and Desdemona serves as a bridge across the cultural divide. Their story tells us that despite different cultural backgrounds, as long as there is a sincere exchange of hearts and minds, misunderstandings can be eliminated and true harmony can be achieved. As Shakespeare said: "Love is blind, it rushes forward regardless, even in the face of the greatest danger, still go forward." In the process of cross-cultural communication, the power of love is infinite. It can dissolve hatred and let us work together to build a harmonious and beautiful world.

As one of Shakespeare's classic works, *Othello* profoundly reflects the theme of cross-cultural conflict and harmony. Through the ups and downs of this tragedy, Shakespeare conveyed an important

message to the world: in the face of cultural differences, only sincere treatment and mutual trust can achieve true harmony. In today's world, cultural diversity is becoming increasingly prominent. This work provides us with a useful inspiration on how to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and achieve harmonious coexistence.

Westerners used to interpret the behavior of people with different histories and cultures according to their own history and culture, and thus they concluded that China would colonize, expand and dominate. Different civilizations do not have to hate each other. They can live in peace and should learn from each other for common development<sup>[4]</sup>. Under the premise of resolving conflicts and accommodating each other, countries around the world have joined hands to meet challenges and conduct international governance with the image of a united community.

#### **4. ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Racism corrupts nations and societies across the globe and is also deeply rooted in colonialism and slavery. It has serious consequences: opportunities are stolen, their dignity is deprived, rights have been violated, life is snuffed out, wonderful lives are destroyed.

In *Othello*, the shadow of racial discrimination and prejudice hangs over the fate of the characters. As a Venetian general, Othello is praised for his military excellence, but is misunderstood and discriminated against because of his skin color. This is in sharp contrast to the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind advocated by China, which emphasizes respect for cultural diversity and promotes exchanges and cooperation among different ethnic groups and races.

The reason for the tragic incident is not because of Othello's jealousy, nor because he is too credulous, but because he is a colored man. He is not recognized and accepted by the surrounding people and this discrimination forces him to the end of the life. As Paul Robertson says, "Shakespeare's Othello learned to live in a strange society, but he did not belong to it." Othello's longing for the civilized social life in Venice is in line with the determination of human beings to pursue progress. However, it is unrealistic to truly integrate into the white society and become one of them with equal status, opportunities and even love.<sup>[6]</sup> Othello has experienced various wars and accidents year after year since childhood. He is a representative of the African people who have been conquered, enslaved, pillaged and killed by white people in that period of history. It is also the image of a hero who has been rigorously trained as the African nations rise up against the brutal violence.

The marriage of Othello and Desdemona not only brings shame on Venetian society as a whole, but also an alien is now further integrated into the society through marriage. It poses a potential threat to the white power of the society. As a victim of racial discrimination, Othello has a serious inferiority complex about his own skin color. He never actively resists the racial discrimination imposed on him by Venetian society. Othello accepts the inferiority of his race, admitting that he is "born black and ugly, lacking the gentle and elegant speech of gentlemen". In his eyes, Desdemona's reputation "as bright as Diana's face", once stained with dirt is as "dark" as his face. All in all, Othello lacks self-confidence and believes Iago's lies because of the obstacles caused by racial discrimination. Therefore, racial discrimination as the narrowest and lowest error of mankind which directly leads to the occurrence of this tragedy.

A reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *Othello* could help to dispel racial prejudice. In this way, annotation and communication between races can be deepened and unity and integration between ethnic groups can be ensured. The world now should foster equal and stable international relations. While it is not easy to achieve full equality between the races, the world is a better place with the kind of tolerance and love that human beings cherish.<sup>[3]</sup> The elimination of discrimination is the only way to a free society and light a community of shared future for mankind shine across the world.

To eliminate all forms of racism and ensure that all people enjoy equal dignity and rights is the spirit of the UN Charter and the embodiment of international justice. This represents respect for and recognition of fundamental human rights which are freedom and equality. All countries, civilizations, races and ethnic groups in the world can participate in international affairs on an equal footing with certain perspectives. In this way, the world will establish a new international political and economic order featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.

## 5. PROMOTION OF EQUAL RIGHTS

In contrast to the depiction of female tragedies in Chinese and Western dramas, traditional Chinese dramas reflect the injustice and plight of women in the family and society, as well as the emotions and inner contradictions of women when they bear these difficulties and oppression. It is manifested in various forms, including women's dissatisfaction and resistance to marriage and family, complaints and dissatisfaction with social injustice and male chauvinism, as well as profound thinking and inner struggle for their own situation and fate. These expressions represent the understanding and attitude towards the status of women in traditional Chinese culture which also embody the traditional values of respecting women and protecting women's rights and interests.

In the Chinese early operas, the theme of "female resentment" is often expressed in the tragic stories of women being forced to marry men they do not love, or lovers being separated. For example, in the classic Chinese love story *Butterfly Lovers*, due to the feudal hierarchy and patriarch system, the heroine ends in a tragic ending, turning into a beautiful butterfly.

In traditional western dramas, the theme of "female resentment" emphasizes women's self-expression and self-pursuit in social and personal aspects. The difference with the same type of traditional Chinese stories is that Western culture attaches more importance to individualism and free will, so its expression forms are more complex and profound. It mainly includes women's dissatisfaction and resistance to the social system, their pursuit and struggle for marriage and personal freedom, and their criticism and reflection on gender discrimination and oppression. These expressions represent the Western culture's emphasis on women's rights and free will, reflecting the value orientation and concept of individualism and free will.

In *Othello*, Desdemona is portrayed as a wise and kind woman, but her feelings and loyalty become the bonds of her destiny. She is misunderstood as an unfaithful wife which ultimately leads to her tragic end. Gender plays an important role in this story. It reveals social prejudice and discrimination against women. Desdemona's fate is limited by her gender which ultimately leads to her tragic end.

Women's liberation is an important part of social liberation and it is also a measure of the degree of social liberation. Social progress can be accurately measured by the social status of women. Today, the degree of liberation and free development of women has become an indicator of the degree of liberation and free development of the whole human race.<sup>[5]</sup>

## 6. CONCLUSION

The building of a community with a shared future for mankind considers the future of the entire human society from the perspective of the future and destiny of the world. It transcends the boundaries of nations, countries and ideologies. It implies the common well-being of people around the world, and shows broad human feelings and a strong spirit of responsibility. The world urgently needs the guidance of thoughts that stand on the level of mankind. It should follow the consensus on the basic values of mankind, conform to the trend of the Times and meet the expectations of people from all countries.

The building of a community with a shared future for mankind will surely overcome numerous obstacles and open a new chapter. The analysis of the common interests and actions of China and the West have further verified that all countries in the world have the responsibility to build a community of shared future for mankind. On the basis of the research on *Othello*, this paper helps to prove that both China and the West have the ideological basis of peaceful development, win-win cooperation and the responsibility of building a community of shared future for mankind.

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