

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF *OTHELLO* DRAMA
PERFORMANCES IN SHAKESPEARE’S GLOBE
THEATRE AND THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
A THESIS**

*To fulfil Partial Requirements for the Award of Sarjana Degree
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BY:

HASBY ASSIDIQY

NIM. 1879202016

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF LANCANG KUNING
PEKANBARU**

2025

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name : Hasby Assidiqy
NIM : 1879202016
Department : English Literature
Title : Comparative Study of Othello Drama Performances in Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company

He passed the Thesis Examination and confirmed that the advisors had thoroughly examined, improved, and approved this thesis.

Approved by,

Advisor I



Dr. Mohd. Fauzi S.S., M. Hum
NIDN. 10 150 37402

Advisor II



Edward S.S., M. HUM
NIDN. 10 1309 6401

Acknowledge by,

Head of Department English
Literature



Dra. Sarta Hutahean M.pd
NIDN. 10 020 56301

Dean of Faculty of
Humanities



Dr. Mohd. Fauzi S.S., M. Hum
NIDN. 10 150 37402

EXAMINER'S APPROVAL

he has passed the thesis exam on 27th, February 2025 and confirmed that the thesis
had been thoroughly examined, improved, and approved by the Advisor.

Team of Examiners

- | | | |
|---------|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Nama | Dr.Mohd.Fauzi S.S.,M.Hum |  |
| 2. Nama | Edward, S.S., M. HUM |  |
| 3. Nama | Dr. Junaidi SS M.Hum. PhD |  |
| 4. Nama | Dra. Sorta Hutahaean, M.Pd |  |

Approved by
Head of Department of English Literature
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Lancang Kuning


Dra. Sorta Hutahaean, M.Pd
NIDN. 1002056301

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STATEMENT FORM

I,

Name: Hasby assidiqy

NIM : 1879202016

Department: English Literature

Thesis Title : Comparative Study of Othello Drama Performances in
Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company

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Hasby Assidiqy
1879202016

ABSTRACT

This research is entitled Comparative Study of Othello Drama Performances in Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company. The objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the racial dynamics, character reinterpretations, and staging choices in the 2007 and 2015 productions of Othello, and (2) to explore how these adaptations reflect and critique societal ideologies, particularly in relation to race, power, and systemic oppression. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using comparative literary analysis and thematic coding to examine the performances. The data sources include video recordings of both productions. The analysis reveals significant contrasts between the two adaptations. The findings highlight how theater adapts classical texts to address contemporary social justice issues, demonstrating the transformative potential of performance. The 2015 RSC production, in particular, challenges audiences to interrogate systemic inequities, while the 2007 Globe version underscores the enduring relevance of Shakespeare's original themes. This study contributes to discourse on theatrical adaptation, illustrating how performance mediates between historical narratives and modern cultural debates

Keywords: Othello, Theatrical Adaptation, Shakespearean Performance, Ideology

INTISARI

Penelitian ini berjudul Studi Komparatif Pertunjukan Drama Othello di Globe Theatre karya Shakespeare dan The Royal Shakespeare Company. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) menganalisis dinamika rasial, penafsiran ulang karakter, dan pilihan pementasan dalam produksi Othello tahun 2007 dan 2015, dan (2) mengeksplorasi bagaimana adaptasi ini mencerminkan dan mengkritik ideologi masyarakat, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan ras, kekuasaan, dan penindasan sistemik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, menggunakan analisis sastra komparatif dan pengodean tematik untuk mengkaji pertunjukan. Sumber data meliputi rekaman video dari kedua produksi, analisis ini mengungkap kontras yang signifikan antara kedua adaptasi tersebut. Temuan ini menyoroti bagaimana teater mengadaptasi teks klasik untuk membahas isu keadilan sosial kontemporer, yang menunjukkan potensi transformatif pertunjukan. Produksi RSC tahun 2015, khususnya, menantang penonton untuk mempertanyakan ketidakadilan sistemik, sementara versi Globe tahun 2007 menggarisbawahi relevansi abadi dari tema asli Shakespeare. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap wacana adaptasi teater, menggambarkan bagaimana pertunjukan memediasi narasi sejarah dan perdebatan budaya modern.

Kata kunci: Othello, Adaptasi Teater, Shakespeare, Ideologi

PREFACE

In the name of Allah, the most praise, and forgiving in his name. and gratitude be to Allah for giving the researcher health and the ability to finish this study, entitled "Comparative Study of Othello Drama Performances in Shakepeare's Globe Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company". This thesis is presented to get one degree in the English Literature Study Program Faculty of Humanity of Universitas Lancang Kuning.

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Pekanbaru, 27 February 2025
The Researcher,



Hasby Assidiqy

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Drama holds significant importance as an artistic expression on stage, a genre that vividly brings narratives to life through the embodiment of characters and their interactions before a live audience. It involves dialogue, actions, and conflicts that unfold before an audience. In the domain of literature, drama often refers to written works intended for performance, encompassing plays and theatrical scripts that are designed to be enacted by actors on a stage. Drama helps develop a person's ability to be able to focus the mind on the story, the characters' physicality, and the dialogue simultaneously. Many drama activities are designed to develop full concentration toward the audience. Even rehearsing and performing lines or movements will require concentration and improve memory, as the experience of watching drama unfolds on stage

Drama performances have been widely consumed by societies since ancient times, promoting communication skills, teamwork, dialogue, and the exploration of ideologies. It stimulates the imagination and creativity to interpret society. Drama is always accompanied by an imaginative portrait of life in context, and the playwright's intelligence is tested. During the golden age of drama theater in England, William Shakespeare emerged as a renowned playwright and an important figure. Among his most popular works, the tragedy Othello continues to be widely adapted and performed even today, a testament to its enduring relevance.

Despite sharing the same Shakespearean source material, two notable productions of *Othello* from different eras have exhibited contrasting approaches. The performance by Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, directed by Wilson Milam, strived to recreate the atmosphere of Shakespeare's era, with period costumes and a minimalistic set design, aiming to capture an authentic interpretation of the original text and staging. In contrast, Iqbal Khan's adaptation for the Royal Shakespeare Company featured a diverse cast and a more stylized visual aesthetic, setting the play in a contemporary context and reflecting present-day sensibilities. These contrasting interpretations make *Othello* an intriguing subject for comparative analysis, as examining the creative choices made by each production can offer insights into how a classic text can be reshaped and imbued with new meanings while preserving its timeless themes and dramatic essence.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre produced a performance of *Othello* directed by Wilson Milam, aiming to capture an authentic interpretation of the original text and staging. Conversely, the Royal Shakespeare Company presented a modern adaptation directed by Iqbal Khan, setting the play in a contemporary context. By analyzing these performances of *Othello*, the study will examine the similarities, dissimilarities, and parallels between the two theatrical interpretations, allowing for a comparative literature analysis to emerge. Interestingly, *Othello*'s performance manages to change the narrative presentation for the audience without altering the previously adapted plot and story, creating new meanings and perspectives for both drama performances. These differences can be differentiated

by identifying several factors, such as the contrasting ideological approaches of each company.

The writer chooses *Othello's* drama performance as the subject for comparative. Othello has many performances with different character modifications, styles, and settings with the same plot. Moreover, no previous analysis has focused on comparing Othello's performances from different companies. In this research, the writer finds Othello's drama performance suitable for analysis, aiming to differentiate the ideological approaches of the drama performances through a comparative analysis to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and gain a deeper understanding.

Several previous researchers have examined Othello drama with comparative analysis. Firstly, Rutger Nicola Elias Janssen (2019) with an analysis of "Comparative Analysis of Race in Tim Nelson's O and Osada & Appignanesi manga (2019)" The Researcher focuses on the cultural influence of Shakespeare adaptations across different cultures worldwide. Secondly, Tulin Ece Tosun (2018) also analyzed *Othello*. In his thesis entitled *Haremization Of Desdemona: A Comparative Study of Shakespeare's Othello in the Ottoman Context*. Then, lastly, Christopher Mujiwa Masule (2014) with his research entitled *Comparative Analysis of the Depiction of Women in Sifiso Nyathi's God of Women and William Shakespeare's Othello*.

By delving into these contrasting productions, the writer seeks to unravel the intricate threads that weave together the authentic and the contemporary,

exploring how creative choices can breathe new life into a canonical piece while preserving its dramatic essence. Moreover, the writer's curiosity is piqued by the ideological underpinnings that shape each company's approach, offering a compelling lens through which to examine the interplay between artistic expression and societal influences. Ultimately, this comparative study emerges from a deep-seated appreciation for the transformative power of drama and a desire to understand how a single narrative can transcend temporal and cultural boundaries, resonating across generations and captivating audiences anew with each retelling.

1.2 Formulation of the problem

Parallel to the background, the writer analyzes the problems which are formulated as follows:

1. What are the major differences between the two performances of Othello?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of each production's approach in terms of preserving the essence of Shakespeare's original work while infusing it with contemporary meanings and cultural perspectives?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Related to the formulation of the problem above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To identify and analyze the major differences between the two Othello performances.
2. To evaluate the strengths and limitations of each production's approach in terms of preserving the essence of Shakespeare's original Othello work while infusing it with contemporary meanings and cultural perspectives.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This comparative study of the Othello productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre holds profound theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding the adaptability of classic dramatic texts, specifically Shakespeare's enduring works. By analyzing how ideological, cultural, and contextual factors influence the interpretation and staging of canonical narratives, the research enriches our understanding of the dynamic interplay between artistic expression and societal influences.

Practically, the study offers invaluable insights for theatre practitioners, directors, and educators involved in staging and interpreting classic plays. It provides a framework for evaluating the strengths and limitations of diverse interpretative approaches, informing future productions and adaptations.

Furthermore, by examining how timeless texts can resonate with modern audiences, the research offers practical implications for making these works more accessible and relevant, fostering a deeper appreciation for their enduring narratives across generations.

In addition, these studies encourage comparative literature. The common readers are expected to understand that comparison between the two drama performances of Othello can be formed in many factors. Hopefully, this research will be useful in helping readers understand how to analyze work with comparative analysis.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

This thesis conducted a comparative analysis by two interpretations of Shakespeare's Othello: the 2007 Shakespeare's Globe Theatre production (directed by Wilson Milam) and the 2015 Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) production (directed by Iqbal Khan). The study revealed how directorial choices in racial dynamics, character reinterpretations, and staging reshape the play's themes for different historical and sociopolitical contexts.

5.2. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are proposed for future research and theatrical practice Comparative Study Of Othello Drama Performances In Shakespeare's Globe Theatre And The Royal Shakespeare Company

for researchers:

- 1) Comparative studies toward the 2015 RSC production with other modern adaptations to explore transcultural reinterpretations of race and power.

- 2) Analyze how other Shakespearean tragedies (e.g., *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*) are reinterpreted in non-Western contexts to decolonize classical scholarship.
- 3) Continue reimagining classical roles (e.g., gender-swapped or racially diverse casting) to challenge stereotypes and broaden representation on Othello's Shakespeare

This study points to the transformative power of theater to reinterpret classical narratives for contemporary audiences. While the 2007 Globe production honored Shakespeare's text, the 2015 RSC adaptation proved that innovation whether through revised endings, diverse casting, or modern settings can breathe new life into centuries-old works. Future adaptations should balance textual fidelity with creative risk-taking to ensure Shakespeare's legacy remains dynamic and inclusive.

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