

## The Primitive in *Othello*: A Post-Jungian Reading

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### **Introduction**

Previous psychological critics—both Jungian and non-Jungian—have glanced at the primitive in connection with Shakespeare’s *Othello*, but most consider it an obvious premise not worthy of deeper consideration. Only Jungian critic Barbara Rogers-Gardner, whose comments on the primitive deal mainly with Othello’s concept of time, begins to unfold the notion of the primitive, though she does not apply Jung’s theory. There is no sustained reading of the primitive in *Othello* from a Jungian perspective despite various references that suggest its relevance—Othello’s travels in strange lands, his attitude toward the handkerchief, and his final speech about the “base Indian” and “turbaned Turk” (5.2.357, 363). On the one hand, the omission of such a reading is strange because the primitive lies at the heart of Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious. He notes that “it was the discovery of the collective unconscious, that is to say, of impersonal psychic processes, that aroused my interest in primitive and Oriental psychology” (CW 18, par. 1286). The collective unconscious, which transcends time and place, connects human beings with archaic elements in psychic human history; and these elements, for Jung, were more evident in tribal cultures than in Western civilizations, though his articulation of these ideas sometimes includes troubling statements about race. On the other hand, however, this stance is not so strange, for Jung’s theory, much like Shakespeare’s description of life, “is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together” (*All’s Well* 4.3.70-71). To use the constructive elements of a concept of the primitive to advance an understanding of the play requires the differentiation, analysis, and critique of elements that are potentially troubling positions regarding race – a critical process undertaken in the spirit of postcolonialism. Once Jung’s theory of the ‘primitive’ has received a post-Jungian corrective, however, the remaining concepts enable a deepened understanding of the “primitive” mentality (meaning psychologically archaic and not tied to race or culture) that ultimately thwarts Othello’s individuation, though the resulting portrait is subject to cultural critique as well. I will first review previous scholarship on *Othello* that draws on either Jung and/or the primitive, then I will critique Jung’s concept of the primitive

in order to arrive at a conceptualization of the primitive to be used in this paper, and finally I will analyze the play *Othello* through that conceptual lens.

***Previous Othello Scholarship: Jung and/or the Primitive***

Previous Jungian criticism has analyzed Othello's problems using an archetypal approach, which focuses on projection. Rogers-Gardner quotes the relevant passage:

A man who is unconscious of himself acts in a blind, instinctive way and is in addition fooled by all the illusions that arise when he sees everything that he is not conscious of in himself coming to meet him from outside as projections upon his neighbour. (CW 13, par. 391)

Maud Bodkin (1934), the first Jungian critic to examine Othello, holds that he projects his anima onto Desdemona and his shadow onto Iago, while Desdemona projects her animus, her inner warrior, onto Othello (219). Non-Jungian critic Robert Rogers (1969) calls the conflict within the main character "endopsychic" or "intrapsychic": the key conflict is within Othello, whose psychic forces are projected onto others (206, 209). For Alex Aronson (1972), Othello is a "victim of the archetype" when he relies on the handkerchief as "ocular proof," allowing anima and shadow (the "devil-figure" Iago) to overcome his ego (27, 110). Perhaps this is why non-Jungian critic Catherine Bates (1993) sees "a profound archetypal significance" in Othello as "a Mars disarmed" (53). In any case, it is no surprise when Rogers-Gardner (1992) states that "Othello is caught between his anima and shadow" (66), but her analysis—the most sustained Jungian reading of the play—adds the helpful idea that whereas Desdemona and Othello's mother "represent witchcraft, anti-reason, and romantic love," Iago "represents wit or tough, reductionist realism" (45). Terrell L. Tebbetts (1997) takes a more comprehensive approach to archetypes and projection. For Tebbetts, Othello-as-general represents male ego, while his blackness reflects the shadow; Othello and Desdemona are animus/anima projections; Iago's sexual suspicions manifest shadow and negative anima; and the trial scene at the Senate enacts a "balanced or individuated psyche" inasmuch as all parties are heard from (93, 95). Later in the play, of course, Othello, Desdemona, and Iago deviate from the ideal of the individuated Self that the Senate represents. Gregg Andrew Hurwitz (2000) memorably adds, "Rather than integrating his shadow and wedding his anima, Othello weds his shadow and neglects his anima" (80). Hurwitz also suggests that the handkerchief represents Othello's attempt "to transfer his anima libido from mother to mate" (82).

To one degree or another, the preceding Jungian approaches to *Othello* all relate to this homology: Desdemona is to anima as Othello is to ego as Iago is to shadow (or what Othello himself calls "some monster in thy thought" at 3.3.119).

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The characters' interaction, then, is a stage psychomachia, with Othello attempting—but ultimately failing—to integrate competing alternatives. Nonintegration of the shadow dooms his attempt to embrace the anima, but previous criticism does not examine how this failure to achieve individuation relates to the primitive.

A number of studies, however, do touch on the primitive in *Othello*. Arguing against Othello as primitive, G.K. Hunter asserts that *Othello* does not use “any simple primitivist terms” or depict “the exploitation of a noble savage by a corrupt European” (157). Whereas Montaigne critiques European society in “Of Cannibals,” the play is “anti-primitivist” because Othello is not a “credulous and passionate savage” (157-60). Since *Othello* does not use primitive society to indict civilization's abuses but rather enacts the disintegration of a primitive psyche in a civilized setting, geography provides a useful framework for understanding the primitive. Abraham Bronson Feldman does not use the term “primitive,” but he does imply that it is a factor in Othello's geographical origin: “Othello's Moorish fatherland is linked in the unconscious not only with sex-terror but also with vision of an id-paradise...a wonderland of libido” (160), which stands in opposition to Venice where reason rules. Although Jung would not be comfortable with Feldman's claim about the id, he would support the critic's link between primitive geography and the unconscious. Moreover, if K.W. Evans is right to consider Cyprus “midway” between the two settings (132), it follows, in the Freudian vein, that Africa is to the id as Venice is to the superego and that on Cyprus Othello's ego attempts to mediate between these competing psychological imperatives.

Othello's journeys through primitive landscapes prior to the opening of the play also suggest that he bears some resemblance to the hero archetype. David Kaula notes that Othello has achieved, “like the standard mythical hero, an upward progress from slavery, dangerous exploits, and exposure to monsters and wild landscapes, to an honored place in Brabantio's drawing room and finally to the love of Desdemona” (116). The point is a valuable one, for the stages of the hero's journey not only characterize Othello's past and present but also correspond to elements of the dramatic situation. Cassio's drunken misbehavior parallels Othello's own unrestrained youth. Young manhood corresponds to the realms that he describes to Desdemona (“antres vast and deserts idle” where cannibals “each other eat” and men have heads that “grow beneath their shoulders” [1.3.142-47]). The young hero becomes a more integrated psyche as a result of battling his shadow projection in a primitive setting, which may be why Robert B. Heilman associates primitivism with “unresting destructiveness” (127). Mature manhood finds Othello commanding the Venetian army, and victory over the primitive Turks ought to herald a time of contentment-in-marriage that would usher him into old

age. The ideal progression is understood to be toward the civilized, but Othello fails to perform one of the hero's duties. Joseph L. Henderson points out in "Ancient myths and modern man" that a hero must "protect beautiful women from terrible danger" (123), not subject them to it as Othello does when he murders his wife. Because Othello has not integrated his shadow in his earlier travels, he cannot properly embrace his anima and is instead at its mercy. James Hillman states, "The more a man identifies with his biological and social role as man (persona), the more will the anima dominate inwardly" (11), and he quotes the following passage from Jung: "Take, for example, the 'spotless' man of honour and public benefactor, whose tantrums and explosive moodiness terrify his wife and children. What is the anima doing here?" (CW 7, par. 319). As Feldman puts it, Othello is "spiritually chained to his mother" (162). Anima addiction (as opposed to anima integration) derails a hero's journey from the primitive landscape—where psychic content is projected and dealt with—to the civilized world where shadow and anima should integrate to enable him to become man-in-relationship-to-woman.

By reflecting the hero's journey in *Othello*, geography implies the role of the primitive and develops the "intrapsychic" approach, but one must turn to Rogers-Gardner for a more direct reading of the primitive in a Jungian context. She first goes the archetypal critics one better by cleverly invoking Shakespeare's own words for angel and devil from Sonnet 144—his two loves "of comfort and despair" (39). Contrary to Feldman, she holds that Othello is a "primitive, innocent man [who falls] into civilized deceit" by allowing Iago, the "angel of despair," to win him over (47). Like the geographical critics, she then describes the realm of Othello's travels as "the warrior's world of the primitive past" (50). Because Othello's worldview is "traditional-tribal" (41), he has a "primitive sense of time" (61) and lives "in the wide open spaces of myth" (61) rather than by the clock—a deficiency that renders him vulnerable to Iago's machinations. Rogers-Gardner's strongest contribution to the discourse on the primitive is this statement: "Jung reminds us continually that only primitives like Othello have access to those deep areas of the unconscious which must be integrated for full maturation, for individuation, and for art" (43). Presumably analysis enables everyone to access the deep unconscious, and one may also quibble that a successful general cannot really be innocent or lack a sense of time. But it is certainly true that Jung considers primitive peoples in general to have greater access to the collective unconscious than those who are civilized.

### ***Jung's Theory of the Primitive***

In this literature review, those who invoke "the primitive" assume that it means the opposite of civilization, the presence of warfare, or what Shakespeare calls in *The Tempest* "the dark backward and abysm of time" (1.2.50). No one

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actually defines it explicitly, and not even Rogers-Gardner considers Jung's extensive statements on the concept. It seems that Jung's primary intention in using the term "primitive" is to convey the "psychologically archaic," that is, areas of the psyche that are less conscious and less differentiated. However, he occasionally makes statements that now are troubling, even racist, in which he seems to conflate such an archaic/primitive psychological state with the skin color of the tribal peoples in whom he thinks such a state predominates. My goal here is to acknowledge and criticize this conflation and then to seek to reclaim the concept of the primitive as meaning psychologically archaic as a tool for analyzing *Othello*. Jung's essay "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry" provides an appropriate starting point for an inquiry into his theory of the 'primitive':

The fact that artistic, scientific, and religious propensities still slumber peacefully together in the small child, or that with primitives the beginnings of art, science, and religion coalesce in the undifferentiated chaos of the magical mentality, or that no trace of "mind" can be found in the natural instincts of animals—all this does nothing to prove the existence of a unifying principle which alone would justify reduction of the one to the other. For if we go so far back into the history of the mind that the distinctions between its various fields of activity become altogether invisible, we do not reach an underlying principle of their unity, but merely an earlier, undifferentiated state in which no separate activities yet exist. (CW 15, par. 99)

Art, science, and religion are evidently of a magical mentality all compact in the mind's distant history. An "undifferentiated state" is not a "principle of their unity," meaning a unity of art, science, and religion, because such distinct fields simply did not exist in human prehistory. Although this conclusion is reasonable, Jung reaches it through a troubling association of primitives with children and animals: even as he provides the helpful concept of the undifferentiated magical mentality, the implied disparagement of native peoples echoes colonial discourse. As Andrew Samuels puts it in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*, Jung's "attitudes to women, blacks, so-called 'primitive' cultures, and so forth are now outmoded and unacceptable. He converted prejudice into theory, and translated his perception of what was current into something supposed to be eternally valid" (2). Samuels is describing the principle of "fixity," which Homi K. Bhabha defines "as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism" (66). As Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin point out, "'the African mind' was slotted into a permanent and fixed difference from the European [mind]..." ("Introduction" 11). Or as Jyotsna Singh argues regarding a traditional

geographical reading of *Othello*, “a ‘symbolic geography’ ...continues to perpetuate racial divisions within today’s postcolonial world” (289).

The Eurocentric attitude that is a mere implication in Jung’s work on psychology and poetry becomes explicitly racist and colonialist when he discusses skin color elsewhere in *The Collected Works*. These racist overtones are unfortunate because he is making an important point about the primitive as a trans-racial phenomenon. He mentions “lower races, more particularly the Negroes” and asserts that “the Negro” and “the Red Indian” are present in the American white person (CW 18, par. 1284 and 94). Here, then, is the problem. A sympathetic reading might assert that Jung is speaking metaphorically and that he *means* to suggest the presence of the psychologically archaic even in the most “civilized” citizens of the West. However, it is clear that he has in this instance conflated the psychologically primitive with darker skin color, leaving him open to valid criticisms and concern regarding his position on race. His logic seems to have gone like this: A. the psychologically primitive state predominates more in tribal cultures than in Western civilization; B. tribal peoples have black and red skin; C. those with black and red skin are therefore primitive. He has forgotten, or neglected to state, that “C” is not a universal truth. Again, a sympathetic reading of his theories would suggest that all of us, because our psyches are in a psychologically undifferentiated state, are capable of increasing our own consciousness through individuation; and that this process includes all humans of any race and both genders. But that is not what Jung says. Therefore, a valid and critical re-reading of Jung’s stance on race and the primitive becomes necessary. The same conflation is present when Jung writes,

Just as the coloured man lives in your cities and even within your houses, so also he lives under your skin, subconsciously. Naturally it works both ways. Just as every Jew has a Christ complex, so every Negro has a white complex and every American [white] a Negro complex. As a rule the coloured man would give anything to change his skin, and the white man hates to admit that he has been touched by the black. (CW 10, par. 963)

Again, what Jung means by “white man hates to admit that he has been touched by the black” is that everyone has great difficulty facing own shadow, those elements of the psyche less conscious, less differentiated; and by “the coloured man would give anything to change his skin,” that the teleological impulse of individuation arising from the Self impels all persons to desire transformation from their archaic psychological states to those of increased consciousness and differentiation. But that is not what he says, and what he does say is troubling. It may be that Jung’s rhetorical propensities are more the issue than the theories themselves, that his examples are problematic and not his theories (which in fact undermine the use of

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such examples), but it is undeniable that his assertions are problematic and need to be reconceptualized to be of use in contemporary literary criticism.

On the other hand, in his essay "Archaic Man," in which "archaic" and "primitive" are synonyms, he specifically states that "man" does not imply skin color but refers instead to "his psychic world, his state of consciousness, and his mode of life." He further maintains that "primitive mentality" is not the exclusive province of one race in particular or even of uncivilized man in general (*CW* 10, par. 105). If the primitive relates to the collective unconscious to which all persons are linked, then everyone has a primitive element inside. He states that "these primitive vestiges still exist in us" and that "certain contents of the collective unconscious are very closely connected with primitive psychology...deep down in our psyche there is a thick layer of primitive processes...closely related to processes that can still be found on the surface of the primitive's daily life" (*CW* 18, par. 1288 and 1289). While his theories clearly assert that that everyone, regardless of race, is in some sense primitive, Jung's discourse is unfortunately sometimes akin to the Duke's statement to Brabantio: "If virtue no delighted beauty lack, / Your son-in-law is far more fair than black" (1.3.292-93). The Duke's praise of Othello, as Phillipa Kelly notes, invokes categories that reflect the same racist sense of difference and otherness that led to the indictment of Othello in the first place (116). The racism of Jung's phrasing of the idea that there are archaic psychological elements present in each person since there is a little black in every white person belies the fact that he is expressing what Edward Said calls the "contrapuntal," a "simultaneous awareness" of "metropolitan history" and "other histories" (51) or what Emily C. Bartels calls "cross-cultural dialogism, recovered traces of the Other in the self, the self in the Other" (46). Like Shakespeare's Duke, Jung sometimes talks about race in binary terms that seem to have universal application, but his theory of the psyche and therefore of the primitive does include its own subaltern voice, which conveys the sense that the boundaries embedded in colonialist discourse, though they may still obtain, are beginning to blur.

If Jung's point is that all persons, whether civilized or not, share a layer of primitive psychology, then what is that primitive layer, and how does it manifest, particularly in a civilized setting? Here too, Jung's discourse in this vein perpetuates the sense of racial difference because he looks to tribal peoples, all of whom possess darker skin color, and he views these primitive peoples as psychologically "inferior." For instance, they lack intellectual capacity, are like "herd animals" in terms of instinct and "well-developed social sense," and like children are both strongly imitative and strongly influenced by the unconscious (*CW* 4, par. 403, 641; 6, par. 422; 8, par. 516; 9i, par. 276). "Primitive people, especially," he writes, "are very much bound to their infantility" (*CW* 4, par. 564).

Their emotions rule their egos (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 242). They are also suspicious of their neighbors, an attitude that in modern civilization results in world war (CW 10, par. 45). Although naturally expressing their sexuality, primitives have strict moral codes, especially as regards sexual matters (CW 10, par. 214; 6, par. 356; 8, par. 465). In short, people characterized predominantly by “primitive” or archaic psychological elements are unintelligent, animal-like, infantile, suspicious, openly sexual, and rigidly moral. Of course, some of these minor characteristics relate to Othello, and behind Shakespeare’s Moor lie the stereotypes of Africans popularized by Leo Africanus’s *The Geographical History of Africa*: “courage, pride, guilelessness, credulity and easily aroused passions” (Cowhig 1).

Jung’s own expeditions to “primitive” cultures reinforce the sense of cultural difference and contrast markedly with Othello’s presence in Venice. Othello, a black man who has traveled through primitive lands, finds himself in Venice where his psychic limitations prove to be stronger than Europe’s civilizing influence. Jung himself journeyed in the opposite direction, visiting Africa twice in 1920 and 1925 and New Mexico in 1924-25 to study the Pueblo tribe of Native Americans (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 242-73). Much as Shakespeare wants to dramatize Othello’s reactions to civilization, Jung wanted to see how he, as a civilized man, would react to Africa—to study his own psyche as much as the “primitive psychology” of the natives he visited. For both Othello and Jung, then, the fundamental issue is how a man’s reaction to a foreign culture whose mentality differs from his own relates to his individuation. If Jung had not expected to find a different mentality among “primitive” peoples than among Europeans, he would not have traveled to far-flung parts of the world, and his self-analytical intention does not adequately ameliorate the assumption of European cultural hegemony.

Redefine the concept of the primitive as meaning psychologically archaic and separate it from a context based on race, though, and Jung has a point when he considers all persons to have a degree of the primitive inside. In the same spirit, William Heinrich Roscher and James Hillman assert that people can be “Western, modern, secular, civilized and sane—but also primitive, archaic, mythical and mad” (qtd. in Douglas 21). A “civilized” person’s primitive side manifests, for example, in Jung’s own positive return to nature when he built his rural retreat at Küsnacht or in Iago’s negative Turk-like machinations. It is vastly more difficult, however, for Othello, the supposedly primitive man, to operate within a highly sophisticated civilization. In any case, according to Jung, the “primitive” man longs for “civilization” because the psyche’s basic goal is growth and civilization here means a social and individual state of further consciousness and differentiation. Jung’s work also frequently acknowledges that civilization is itself problematic in a multiplicity of ways, including civilized man’s vestigial primitivism whose most obvious manifestation is war. Although, on the surface, the Venetians are fighting



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the Turks, they are really battling an element of themselves, working through their own primitive mentality. Jung suggests, “The dammed-up instinctual forces in civilized man are immensely destructive and far more dangerous than the instincts of the primitive, who in a modest degree is constantly living out his negative instinct,” and he considers world war a manifestation of the primitive within and among civilized nations (CW 6, par. 230). In “The Fight with the Shadow,” Jung attributes world war to unconscious influence because “we simply accuse our enemy of our own unadmitted faults” (CW 10, par. 444; 8, par. 516). (For a similar point, see Johannes Fabricius’s *Shakespeare’s Hidden World: A Study of His Unconscious*. Fabricius associates war in *Richard III* with something akin to the Jungian shadow [18].)

Civilized persons’ vestigial primitivism also illuminates Desdemona’s attraction to Othello. Jung writes in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* that “the sight of a child or a primitive will arouse certain longings in adult, civilized persons—longings which relate to the unfulfilled desires and needs of those parts of the personality which have been blotted out of the total picture in favor of the adapted persona” (244). It is not merely, as the archetypal critics argue, that Desdemona projects her animus onto Othello but also that their interaction makes her aware of her own “dammed-up instinctual forces.” Jung notes a similar phenomenon in a comment about American girls:

We often discover with Americans that they are tremendously unconscious of themselves. Sometimes they suddenly grow aware of themselves, and then you get these interesting stories of decent young girls eloping with Chinamen or with Negroes, because in the American that primitive layer, which with us is a bit difficult, with them is decidedly disagreeable, as it is much lower down. It is the same phenomenon as “going black” or “going native” in Africa. (CW 18, par. 341)

The statement’s racism and Eurocentrism are so troubling that it is necessary to state at once what I am not saying. I am not saying that there is anything wrong with interracial marriage or that Jung is necessarily wrong about Americans, especially during the current period of conflict in Iraq, where we seem to be projecting our own shadow onto a foreign foe and neglecting our own inner work. It is my intention, however, to examine Jung’s quotation to see whether it contains anything beyond obvious flaws and, if so, to apply his valid insights to *Othello*. The passage suggests that while all persons have a primitive element by virtue of the collective unconscious, the primitive in Americans is layered over with greater repression than in Europeans who, though they struggle with unconscious forces too, have somehow managed to become more individuated (that is, have achieved

greater conscious awareness of their own unconscious forces). When a white American girl becomes somewhat aware of her unconscious, primitive nature, however, she affirms it by projecting it onto a black man whom she then marries. The stronger the repression of the unconscious, the more force it will have when it is released. The passage repeats the unacceptable linkage of race and primitivism, but the point for Desdemona is that Othello's stories activate her animus and make her aware of her own primitive nature, which she embraces through projection and marriage to the Moor. There is not only animus/anima projection in the union of the Venetian belle and the African general but also a connection in terms of the primitive—Desdemona may subtly desire it, while Othello appreciates the pity she feels for his endurance of it (1.3.163). Jung's analysis of American girls and my application of it to Desdemona reinforce what one might call an "urban myth."

Given the enormous popularity of travel books among white women (the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1710 was to lament the fact that "a thousand Desdemonas" were so obsessed with stories of African men that they would readily abandon husbands, families and country itself, to "follow the fortunes of the black tribe"), can we not say that Desdemona was an early travel book "fanatic"? (Cowhig 13)

Although Shakespeare, Shaftesbury, and Jung may, to an extent, reflect white European males' insecurity about female sexuality and fidelity, the dependability of their evidence remains an open question.

So far, Jung's valid principle of universal primitivism, defined as archaic, undifferentiated, and less conscious elements of the psyche, is sometimes obscured by racist rhetoric that centers on binary opposition and creates a sense of alterity. As in the preceding example, however, his insights—perhaps because of their flaws—are not without some application to *Othello*. A more positive aspect of Jungian primitivism—and what motivated Jung to visit African and Native American villages—is the aforementioned "magical mentality" and the primitive's connection to the collective unconscious. Steven F. Walker writes, "Yet the 'primitive' is wise in the ways of psychology, capable of establishing a relationship with the archetypal world" (142). He does this primarily through projection, as Jung points out: "We find this phenomenon beautifully developed in primitive man," who "is somewhat more given to projection than we [are]" (CW 10, par. 44, 132). In "Archaic Man," Jung takes the point a step further: "Projection is one of the commonest psychic phenomena. It is the same as *participation mystique*, which Lévy-Bruhl, to his great credit, emphasized as being an essentially characteristic feature of primitive man" (CW 10, par. 131). It is this projection, or "non-differentiation" between subject and object or between the perceiving mind and the perceived object, that characterizes a primitive mind as opposed to a civilized

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mind, for the latter type distinguishes between “qualities which, formerly, were naïvely attributed to the object [but] are in reality subjective contents” (CW 7, par. 329; 8, par. 516). “To him [the primitive] the world is a more or less fluid phenomenon within the stream of his own fantasy, where subject and object are undifferentiated and in a state of mutual interpenetration” (CW 9i, par. 187).

According to Jung’s line of reasoning, because primitives do not realize that projection is taking place, they assume that there is no difference between psychic content and external objects (CW 18, par. 1297). Dire consequences result when civilized persons make the same mistake. The most obvious is war, which is not merely a manifestation of primitive instincts but also an example of projection. A second consequence is fetishism, the belief that objects have power and significance in themselves. In a passage that could nicely illuminate the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, Jung writes: “For primitive man any object, for instance an old tin [or Coke bottle] that has been thrown away, can suddenly assume the importance of a fetish. This effect is obviously not inherent in the tin, but is a psychic product” (CW 10, par. 625). Elsewhere he expresses the projection phenomenon as follows; *participation mystique*

aptly formulates the primordial relation of the primitive to the object. His objects have a dynamic animation, they are charged with soul-stuff or soul-force (and not always possessed of souls, as the animist theory supposes), so that they have a direct psychic effect upon him, producing what is practically a dynamic identification with the object.... Its [the object’s] strong libido investment comes from its *participation mystique* with the subject’s own unconscious. (CW 6, par. 495)

A third consequence of projection is superstition; the primitive assumes the existence of magic “supra-personal ‘powers’”: “Primitive man has a minimum of self-awareness combined with a maximum of attachment to the object; hence the object can exercise a direct magical compulsion upon him” (CW 8, par. 95, 516). As Jung points out in “Archaic Man,” for example, primitives assume that occurrences may be ascribed to supernatural causes and that what “we call pure chance is for him [primitive man] wilful [sic] intention” (CW 10, par. 107, 117). There is no doubt that *participation mystique* adumbrates cultural difference (all humans are prone to projection, but primitives’ “magical mentality” makes them most prone of all). For the moment, however, I will suspend this kind of critique and see where Jung’s line of thinking leads.

### ***The Primitive and Desdemona’s Handkerchief***

War, fetishism, and the supernatural—unlike the minor characteristics of the primitive—have a major bearing upon an interpretation of *Othello*. Projection in each case springs from and defines a primitive mentality and illustrates an inability to distinguish between subject and object. The war against the Turks shadows forth the Venetians' own inner negativity, while the primitive in fetishism and the supernatural relates to the matter of interpretation that has most engaged the play's critics—Desdemona's ill-fated handkerchief.

That handkerchief  
Did an Egyptian to my mother give.  
She was a charmer, and could almost read  
The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it  
'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father  
Entirely to her love, but if she lost it  
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye  
Should hold her loathèd and his spirits should hunt  
After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me,  
And bid me, when my fate would have me wived,  
To give it her. I did so; and take heed on 't;  
Make it a darling like your precious eye.  
To lose 't or giv 't away were such perdition  
As nothing else could match....  
'Tis true. There's magic in the web of it.  
A sibyl, that had numbered in the world  
The sun to course two hundred compasses,  
In her prophetic fury sewed the work;  
The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk  
And it was dyed in mummy which the skillful  
Conserved of maidens' hearts. (3.4.57-77)

The handkerchief definitely qualifies as a symbol because there is no "pat definition of its significance" (Adams 315). To begin with, its origin is ambiguous—Othello's mother got it from an Egyptian charmer in one passage (3.4.57-58) and from Othello's father in another (5.2.223-24). Othello may truly impute magical power to the handkerchief and mention his father only when it suits the dramatic situation (Andrews 273); but if the father story represents his "real feelings" (Reid 291), then the mythological story may be a fabrication (Evans 134, Jones 102-3). The handkerchief is an emblem of death (Kaula 126), responsibility for marital happiness (Reid 291), "purity or honesty" (Stockholder 268), Desdemona's reputation (Hodgson), "women's civilizing power" (Neely 228), the "primal scene" (parents' lovemaking) and "the mysteries of female sexuality" (Rudnytsky 185), the capacity for love and pity (Rogers-Gardner 69), sexual power and chastity (Berger 239), and both purity and baseness (Fisher 205). The handkerchief's strawberry pattern symbolizes nipples (Wangh 212), breasts (Faber

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242), the penis (Jofen 14), breast and penis interchangeably (Smith 160), the clitoris (Newman 156), or virgin blood on the wedding sheets (Jofen 14, Boose 362). Placing the object in the context of emblem books and Shakespeare's other plays, Lawrence J. Ross argues that strawberries represent both Desdemona's true goodness and Othello's warped perception of that goodness (227, 239). The worms that produced the silk for the handkerchief suggest the sensuous and primal nature of Othello's love (Elliott 151-52); they are a phallic image (Boose 367) as well as an "emblem of self-entanglement" (Bates 58) and "of death, sexuality, and procreation" (Neely 229). Others consider the handkerchief an echo of St. Veronica's handkerchief (Doloff 13), a "bridge" between states of mind and a "surrogate" for ocular proof (Mudford 5), a "floating signifier" (Rudnytsky 171, Rogers-Gardner 65) or a "snowballing signifier" (Newman 156), and a fetish (Stockholder 266, Rudnytsky 185). Finally, those who seek a Lacanian psychoanalytic reading will find much of interest in Elizabeth J. Bellamy's article on the subject.

A question untouched in the criticism, however, is how Jung's notion of the primitive illuminates specific elements of the handkerchief's main description. There is no doubt, as Katherine S. Stockholder points out, that Othello "confuse[s] the handkerchief...with the human love it represents" (265), but a Jungian interpretation of the handkerchief locates this problem of projection in a specifically primitive mentality. Writing about "primitive and archaic psychology," Jung states, "The unconscious identity, in turn, is caused by the projection of unconscious contents into an object, so that these contents then become accessible to consciousness as qualities apparently belonging to the object" (CW 13, par. 122). The seriousness of the blurring of subject and object becomes clearer when Jung discusses the notion of "bush-soul": "Many primitives assume that, as well as his own, a man has a 'bush-soul,' incarnate in a wild animal or a tree, with which he is connected by a kind of psychic identity. This is what Lévy-Bruhl called *participation mystique*.... Injury to the bush-soul means an equal injury to the man" (CW 18, par. 440). In Shakespearean terms, as it is done to the handkerchief (object), so it is also done to Othello (subject) and to his marriage, which is why Lynda E. Boose rightly mentions "the triviality of this object which the primitive invests with disproportionate significance" (360). Jung's theory of primitives' projection, then, undergirds Othello's caveat that losing or giving away the handkerchief would signify that Desdemona is no longer "amiable" and that the marriage has come to "perdition" (3.4.61, 69).

Even the inherited nature of the handkerchief relates to the primitive:

The lively imitateness which we find in primitives as well as in children can give rise, in particularly sensitive children, to a

peculiar inner identification with the parents, to a mental attitude so similar to theirs that effects in real life are sometimes produced which, even in detail resemble the personal experiences of the parents. (CW 4, par. 308)

When Jung also notes the importance of ceremony, one thinks of the ritual transfer of the handkerchief from mother to son to wife. With primitives, Jung writes, “you find that all important events of life are connected with elaborate ceremonies whose purpose is to detach man from the preceding stage of existence and to help him to transfer his psychic energy into the next phase” (CW 18, par. 365). Thus the handkerchief has such a grip on Othello’s psyche for three reasons: he has the primitive’s tendency to project psychic content onto objects, he has learned the story from his mother (a particularly primitive thinker), and the object’s ceremonial transfer from mother to son to wife signifies a corresponding transition within Othello himself.

For the same reasons, the loss of the handkerchief—the “ocular proof” of Desdemona’s supposed infidelity—is particularly potent for Othello. Jung writes, “Here you see the chief difference between primitive and civilized psychology: with us a word is enough to release an accumulation of forces, but with primitives an elaborate pantomime is needed, with all manner of embellishments which are calculated to put the man into the right mood for acting” (CW 18, par. 1289). What is Iago’s manipulation of the handkerchief if not “an elaborate pantomime”? Finally, since *participation mystique* surely characterizes Othello’s attitude toward the handkerchief, then, as Michael C. Andrews maintains, Othello “does indeed impute magical properties to the handkerchief” (273). The handkerchief story is consistent with Jung’s portrait of the primitive mindset: Othello really believes what he tells his wife about its supernatural qualities, despite his later statement that his father gave it to his mother.

Besides amplifying the role of projection in the confusion between subject and object, a Jungian approach provides terms for the handkerchief’s function within the symbolic process. Jung mentions the “detachment of libido from the real object, its concentration on the symbol and canalization into a symbolic function” (CW 6, par. 402). Libido for Jung is psychic energy in general (CW 4, par. 566-67), but in Othello’s case the Freudian sexual libido is the right concept. Othello (as subject) detaches his sexual desire (“libido”) from Desdemona (“the real object”) and attaches it (channels or “canalizes” it) to the handkerchief (“symbol”) so that, in his own mind at least, it restrains male lust (“symbolic function”). In the same paragraph, Jung adds something a bit different: “The detachment of libido from the [real] object transfers it into the subject, when it activates the images lying dormant in the unconscious. These images are archaic forms of expression which become symbols, and these appear in their turn as equivalents of the devalued objects” (CW

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6, par. 402). In other words, “Symbolic images are genuine transformers of psychic energy because *a symbolic image evokes the totality of the archetype it reflects*” (Salman 65; author’s italics). By detaching his sexual desire from Desdemona, Othello internalizes it, activating male sexual restraint (the archetype), which he then projects onto the handkerchief (archetypal image). If “the archetype cannot be named until it is represented by a symbol” (Baird 9), then a symbol *represents* the archetype. Othello’s problem, however, is that he considers them one and the same thing: rather than merely seeing the handkerchief as a symbol of male sexual restraint, he believes that the handkerchief actually regulates sexuality—that the symbol *is* the archetype that it represents. In other words, Othello mistakes a symbol, which “depicts a reality that cannot be fully explained,” for a sign, which “is immediately understood” (Hart 95). Jung ascribes such an error in judgment to a specifically primitive propensity: “For primitive man...the psychic and the objective coalesce in the external world” (CW 10, par. 128).

Because one of the defining qualities of the Jungian primitive, along with *participation mystique*, is its relation to man’s ancient origins, the sibyl is relevant to this discussion. (There are only four other references to the sibyl in Shakespeare’s works: *IH6* 1.2.56, *Shrew* 1.2.69, *Titus* 4.1.107, and *MV* 1.2.104.) Though not addressing the primitive, Boose forges the relevant link: “Because the ritual origins of marital blood pledge stretch back into man’s ancient consciousness, ‘A sibyl, that had number’d in the world / The sun to make two hundred compasses, / In her prophetic fury sew’d the work’ (III.iv.68-70)” (367). There is more afoot here than Stockholder’s simple association of the sibyl and wisdom (266). Although the sibyl in *Othello* is only two hundred years old, the sibyl, as an ancient figure, participates in the primitive, and a look at what Jung says about her illuminates an understanding of Othello’s primitive consciousness.

The sibyl, of course, is best known for her role as guide to Aeneas during his journey through the underworld in the *Aeneid*, Book 6, a journey signifying the hero’s exploration of his own unconscious mind (Bevan 140). Although Jung does not mention the sibyl and Aeneas together, what he does say about her is Virgilian in spirit. She is “the guide of souls,” “a feminine psychopomp” (one who delivers the souls of the dead), “the sibylline anima,” and “the anima-sibyl”—not just a guide but a guide to the essential feminine quality within a man (CW 14, par. 282, 287, 300, 313). As what James Hillman calls a “girl guide” (133), the sibyl is part of an anima pattern in the handkerchief’s description that calls to mind Jung’s “four stages of eroticism,” which coincidentally happen to be anima-figures: Eve, Helen of Troy, the Virgin Mary, and Sophia (CW 16, par. 361). The handkerchief is handed down from the sibyl to the Egyptian sorceress, Othello’s mother, and finally Desdemona. Merging the two patterns yields an exact correspondence:

- Sibyl/Sophia: anima that provides wisdom and guidance
- Sorceress/Helen: anima that bewitches and misguides
- Othello's mother/Mary: maternal anima that nurtures but can also smother
- Desdemona/Eve: wifely anima and proper partnership

The bullet points suggest a number of things: first, a maturation process whose goal is to affirm the wisdom that marks its origin; second, encounters with types of anima (mother, whore, witch) that must be confronted and integrated into consciousness; and third, if the hero makes it this far, psychic integration in union with a wife, who may yet betray him. The handkerchief's transmission from one female figure to the next over a period of generations is thus a triptych for Othello's—or any man's—individuation within his own lifetime. As the Jung-Shakespeare parallel suggests, the handkerchief represents stages of psychological development that Othello must work through—but has not—in order to be successfully married.

The sibyl is significant not only for promoting a man's individuation but also for guiding him from the primitive to the civilized. Jung writes, "The sibyl, the guide of souls, shows the hero the way to Mercurius, who in this case is Hermes Trismegistus" (CW 14, par. 300). As Albert Pike points out, Hermes Trismegistus made substantial contributions to ancient Greek and Egyptian civilization by naming things, teaching men to write, inventing hieroglyphics, and teaching methods of interpretation—even his name means interpreter (*Morals and Dogma*). In other words, the sibyl, for Jung, guides the psyche away from the primitive's inability to distinguish between subject and object, toward civilized man's ability to differentiate between signifier and signified. With Hermes Trismegistus in the background, the handkerchief's history is ironic, for its genealogy implies an antidote to the projection that it invites as a fetish object. The sibyl is actually not responsible for the projection-inviting myth of the handkerchief. Although she wove it in ways that seem magical to Othello, it was the Egyptian charmer (a Helen-figure) who touched off the *participation mystique* by promulgating the myth that the handkerchief will make a woman "amiable" and "subdue" her husband's libido "to her love." Far from being to blame for Othello's projection problem, the sibyl actually guides men toward a civilized use of signification in which external objects do not govern psychological processes. (It is possible, however, to be sibyl-like in a negative way as well. Writing about international criticism of the Germans, Jung states, "It is blasphemy to them, for Hitler is the Sybil [*sic*], the Delphic Oracle" [qtd. in Hayman 343]. The following homology emerges: Hitler:swastika:negative::Sibyl:handkerchief:positive.)

The sibyl's civilizing influence relates to yet another passage in Jung's writings: the "Erythraean Sibyl...was alleged to have foretold the coming of



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Christ” (CW 14, par. 277; cf. 9ii, par. 127, n. 2). The sibyl is primitive only in the sense that she is ancient. For Jung, she is a civilizing force in the course of human events, for she helps men with the individuation process, relates to a properly functioning symbol system, and prophesies the coming of Christ who represents the apex of ancient civilization. An irony immediately surfaces. Although the sibyl teaches ancient peoples how to use symbols in a way that properly disconnects subject and object, she foretells the coming of the person who says that bread and wine are his body and blood. Transubstantiation bears considerable similarity to the *participation mystique* that bedevils Othello as he contemplates the handkerchief. But as the sibyl wisely foretells the coming of Christ, so the sibylline handkerchief prefigures Othello’s baptism. There is no causal relationship on either side of the homology—the existence of the handkerchief does not directly effect the baptism. In each case, however, psychological well-being precedes and prepares the way for spiritual wisdom, and baptism signals the birth of “spiritual man,” as Jung mentions:

I mean that the idea of baptism lifts man out of his archaic identification with the world and transforms him into a being who stands above it. The fact that mankind has risen to the level of this idea is baptism in the deepest sense, for it means the birth of spiritual man who transcends nature. (CW 10, par. 136)

But Othello is no more able to affirm the Christian message of loving kindness and its Pauline extrapolation—that husbands and wives should be subject to each other—than to achieve psychic integration by embracing his shadow and his anima. On the contrary, as David Kaula states, by regarding the handkerchief as magic, “Othello is in a sense renouncing his baptism” (125). Far from becoming spiritual man or even psychological man, Othello remains primitive man, unable to distinguish between his own psychic forces and the object onto which he projects them.

Because *participation mystique* governs Othello’s psyche, he puts all his stock in the strawberry handkerchief and none in the signified thing that it *truly* represents—bloody wedding sheets. For critics, whether the marriage is consummated remains mysterious (Boose, Glaz, Orkin, and Rogers-Gardner believe that the marriage is consummated; Nelson and Haines, along with Rudnytsky, believe that it is not), but Jung’s insights into the sexual libido illuminate the issue. “Non-employment of the libido makes it ungovernable.” “When, therefore, unconscious contents accumulate as a result of being consistently ignored, they are bound to exert an influence that is pathological. There are just as many neurotics among primitives as among civilized Europeans” (CW 4, par. 474; 10, par. 26). Jung’s comments on repression sound distinctly

Freudian: the monster is the thing that is repressed. Othello has been directing all of his libido—sexual and otherwise—into prosecuting a war against the Turks, and now that the victory has been achieved the “young affects” in him are “defunct” (1.3.266-67), which may mean that he is unable to consummate his marriage. He is repressed, first, because his martial duties will not allow otherwise; and later his impotence makes him unable to perform his marital duties at his leisure. On the one hand, Othello’s “impotence” is transformed into a defensive accusation—guilt becomes blame. On the other, it could be that his sex-libido becomes ungovernable. When Desdemona declines from what Jung calls a *femme inspiratrix* by interrupting Othello to go do housework and by arguing for Cassio’s reinstatement, Othello’s sex drive, which should have been relieved in consummation, is “canalized” into spousal abuse. (Jung writes that the *femme inspiratrix*, “if falsely cultivated, can turn into the worst kind of dogmatist and high-handed pedagogue—a regular ‘animus hound,’ as one of my women patients aptly expressed it” [CW 7, par. 336]. This is essentially the perception of Desdemona that Iago instigates in Othello’s psyche. See also CW 11, par. 240; and 17, par. 340.)

### ***The Primitive and Othello’s Final Speech***

As the great victor over the Turks ironically behaves like the enemy, we come to the final evidence of Othello’s primitive mentality. On the one hand, his last speech has been considered schizophrenia (Burton 58); an undermining of Othello’s identity (Singh 287); and an expression of “universal human weakness,” an escape from reality, and a self-dramatizing aesthetic attitude (Eliot 110-11). On the other, it is a subaltern’s self-reclamation, self-appropriation, and reversal of “colonial encryption” (Habib 145). My Jungian position is that Othello’s comments in his final speech express a frank confrontation among his intrapsychic forces. It affirms reality and asserts such strength-in-identity as he still possesses (not weakness or schizophrenia); however, far from constituting a postcolonial voice, the speech shows the extent of Othello’s submission to the dominant discourse. His final utterance is what ethnographers call “transculturation,” “processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (Pratt 533).

By using third person in his last speech, Othello puts psychic distance between his civilized self and the part of him that killed his wife. The two analogies correspond to his former lack of self-awareness (Indian) and his present self-realization (Turk). His primitive mentality is on greater display in his first analogy: killing his wife makes him like “the base Indian, [who] threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe” (5.2.357-58; Jones 108; Hunter 160). An “Indian” in Shakespeare’s time is not only a denizen of India but also a Native American (*OED* B.2.a). (Shakespeare’s other references to Indians appear in *All’s Well* 1.3.201;

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*MSND* 2.1.22, 124 and 3.2.375; *MV* 3.2.99; *3H6* 3.1.63; *H8* 5.4.33, and *Tempest* 2.2.33.) As Leslie A. Fiedler states, “By the time *Othello* was written, the first English explorations of the New World had already occurred, and the audiences had learned to associate the word ‘tribe’ not only with Jews but with those red men whose contempt for gold and precious stones had already become proverbial” (196). Reflecting on his trip to New Mexico in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung considers Native Americans to be at “a still lower cultural level” than he had found in the Sahara and notes that they think with the heart rather than the head (247). Although he admires their closeness to the archetypes, Native Americans may participate in the lack of self-awareness that he observes in African tribesmen. After asking what state would characterize children who grew up without formal schooling, he writes:

It would be a primitive state, and when such children came of age they would, despite their native intelligence, still remain primitive—savages, in fact, rather like a tribe of intelligent Negroes or Bushmen. They would not necessarily be stupid, but merely intelligent by instinct. They would be ignorant, and therefore unconscious of themselves and the world. (*CW* 17, par. 104)

Far from being one of Jung’s ignorant bushmen, Othello inhabits the liminal space between savagery and civilization—his murderous nature has been put to the service of the Venetian state. But he shares with the bushman—and presumably with Jung’s version of the Native American—a lack of self-awareness, the predominance of heart over head, and, again, the inability to distinguish outer objects and events from his own psychological processes.

Whereas Act 5 shocks Othello into the painful awareness that leads to his comparison to “the base Indian,” his ultimate reference to the primitive Turk not only amplifies his self-realization but also explains his suicide. The Turks, in their treachery and bellicosity, are to the primitive as the Venetians, with their elaborate judicial system, are to civilization. Styling himself as the opponent of the one and the avenger of the other, Othello projects his psychic situation onto a remembered conflict.

Set you down this;  
And say besides that in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and turbaned Turk  
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
I took by th’ throat the circumcisèd dog  
And smote him, thus. (5.2.361-66)

On the surface, Othello is saying that, in Aleppo (present day Syria), he killed a Turk who had beaten a Venetian citizen and spoken maliciously of the state (presumably but not necessarily Venice). As Othello dispensed justice to the primitive and pagan Turk on that earlier occasion, so he now, as Harold C. Goddard points out, punishes the Turk-like part of himself by committing suicide (467). He too is a “circumcised dog” who beats and murders a Venetian (his wife), but like his former self he now exacts strict justice with a blade. In Freudian terms, the superego (Othello) snuffs out the id (Turk) that had been assailing the ego (Venetian). In Jungian terms, Othello’s final analogy declares victory over the shadow, probably by the persona rather than the Self, for he speaks his last words not as Whole Othello but as General Othello, dispenser of swift justice and broken man. He has achieved a Pyrrhic victory: the shadow, once wedded, is now divorced and beaten but not integrated—all at the cost of his own life. His suicide indeed marks the disintegration of his psyche rather than individuation, the psyche’s government by the Self, the latter being Jung’s term for “the wholeness of our psyche” (Franz 293).

Achieving individuation enables one to overcome the crux of the primitive mentality: “If the transposition [from ego to self] is successful, it does away with the *participation mystique*...” (CW 13, par. 67). The goal of individuation is

to detach consciousness from the object so that the individual no longer places the guarantee of his happiness, or of his life even, in factors outside himself, whether they be persons, ideas or circumstances [or handkerchiefs], but comes to realize that everything depends on whether he holds the treasure or not. If the possession of that gold is realized, then the centre of gravity is in the individual and no longer in an object on which he depends. (CW 18, par. 377)

In short, Othello’s fetishism—his inappropriate attitude toward an object, which arises from his primitive mentality—is the main barrier to his individuation, the shift from ego to the greater wholeness of the Self. Shakespeare provides a fitting image for this lack of transition. After killing Desdemona, Othello says, “Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse / Of sun and moon, and that th’ affrighted globe / Should yawn at alternation” (5.2.102-4). The murder causes the whole earth to shudder and no doubt proves especially shocking for those who have just witnessed it in the Globe Theatre, but the image takes on a further meaning in a Jungian context. As Marie-Louise von Franz points out, “In art it [the Self] is often depicted as the globe of the world, which clearly shows its meaning, for the child and the sphere are widespread symbols of wholeness” (346). The shadow-driven murder of Desdemona affrights the Self, which seeks to draw Othello from the primitive tendency for *participation mystique* toward a greater psychic integration through a

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more sophisticated understanding of signification. Ultimately, however, his death is tragic not because he never realizes the error of his primitive thinking but because the realization comes too late for him to conceive of any outcome other than self-murder.

### **Conclusion**

Othello's adoption of the dominant culture's discourse ("base Indian" and "turbaned Turk") illustrates the position held by Patricia Parker (99) and Stephen Greenblatt (233) that his psychological deterioration parallels colonization. The dominant culture is to the subordinate culture as Iago is to Othello, Venice is to Cyprus, and England is to Africa. Part of his fall is his *participation mystique* (he is guilty of projection), but as a fictional character and a product of the playwright's own projection, the Moor reflects the Elizabethans' ambivalence about "the alien other" (Habib 139), otherness that is "at once an object of desire and derision" (Bhabha 67). Regarding the Elizabethans, Cowhig elaborates a plethora of mixed emotions such as fascination, prejudice, fear, distrust, and hostility (1). Ania Loomba adds, "Outsiders provoked more debates, anxiety, and representations than the population statistics might warrant" ("Outsiders" 148).

Jung's theory of the primitive provides an appropriate starting point for examining Shakespeare's depiction of the Moor precisely because both theory and play are rife with the same flaws that come into focus under the lens of postcolonial critique. Both Shakespeare and Jung convey a sense that the European is distinct from the Other, and this relationship implies hierarchy based on value judgment—a privileging of the civilized over the primitive. Thus the ambivalence felt within the Elizabethan psyche is at least partly a projection of psychic content onto a "primitive" Other and a handy method of sidestepping individuation. The terminology and examples of Jung's formulation of the primitive are often problematic and are critiqued by Jung's theories themselves.

By using this post-Jungian conceptualization of the "primitive" (defined as those elements of the psyche that remain archaic, undifferentiated, and less conscious) and by recognizing that there is a strong tendency to project such elements outward to other individuals, groups, and societies, we may illuminate familiar elements of *Othello* in new ways. The exploration of the post-Jungian conceptualization of the primitive in *Othello* illustrates the power of literature to portray and convey essential human truths: Othello's tragic flaw is thus seen less as jealousy than as his inability to confront and overcome his own archaic psychological states, of which jealousy is one symptom. The play demonstrates that psychologically primitive powers lurking in each person's psyche can cause devastating damage, but Jung's theories also remind us all that within each psyche

reside the potential and desire for individuation, growth, balance, and increased wholeness. If we wish to avoid such literal or symbolic destruction in our lives, these primitive elements must be brought to consciousness through the individuation process, and their power must not be repressed but rather channeled and integrated into individual and social growth. In this way we can avoid our own unique version of Othello's fate.

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