



## "My suggestions to Peter"

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My suggestions to Peter:

- look beyond the obsession w/ O's race & the stereotypes critics impose (7. R. Heavens "obscure & brutal")
- look beyond O.s. role as innocent, passive, be-numbered by love; the routines analysis she is allowed.
  - a) she runs away from home to marry O
  - b) she insists on joining him in Cyprus
  - c) she wants to be in his (Othello's) business: a partner outside the bed. May explain the otherwise "unwifely" urging of re-instating Cassio. As well as distracting O from his <sup>handicraft</sup> chief interrogation.
  - d) she has (and appears not to want) no women friends of her own station.

- look beyond Iago's perfidy as having a sole motive. Consider whether the "evil" he represents is simply wanton = the "play" of mendacity evil w/o profit (tho' he explains his motives as revenge, jealousy etc) he is entertaining himself. "Pleasure & action make the hours short"

"hot term -  
intrigue  
not long term  
strategy"

Dynamic of Race: Giraldo Cinthio's Hecatomithi

- more potent than class or "foreignness" w/o race
- therefore more distracting & more easily reduced to its most reductive form.
- Yet S. is deliberate & aware ("The Moor & I")
  - 1) audiences are riveted by this tension
  - 2) S. scholars have debated for years the kind of "blackness" of O's skin.
  - 3) Characters in the play are emphatically aware of O's race, his "blackness" and use metaphoric as well as name-calling.
- \* 4) Only O. seems unaware:
  - Refers to him "The Moor" - only one "Othello" & "My lord." "my noble Moor"
- because of the "exoticism" of his race the Question of Desdemona's ("Unfortunate") love arises.
  - she is the one who starts the affair - What is the attraction?
  - "Magic" i.e. "Black magic"
- \* - but she is not seduced by his race but rather his language: the narratives:
  - a) content = bravery, risk, adventure
  - b) art = the shape of the stories
- Craves more: in this way S. destabilizes stereotype of discredited race





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"Foreigner"

Living as a "de facto" foreigner in my  
own country.

cf Isak Dinesen

Nature of the struggle  
(for or against) identity

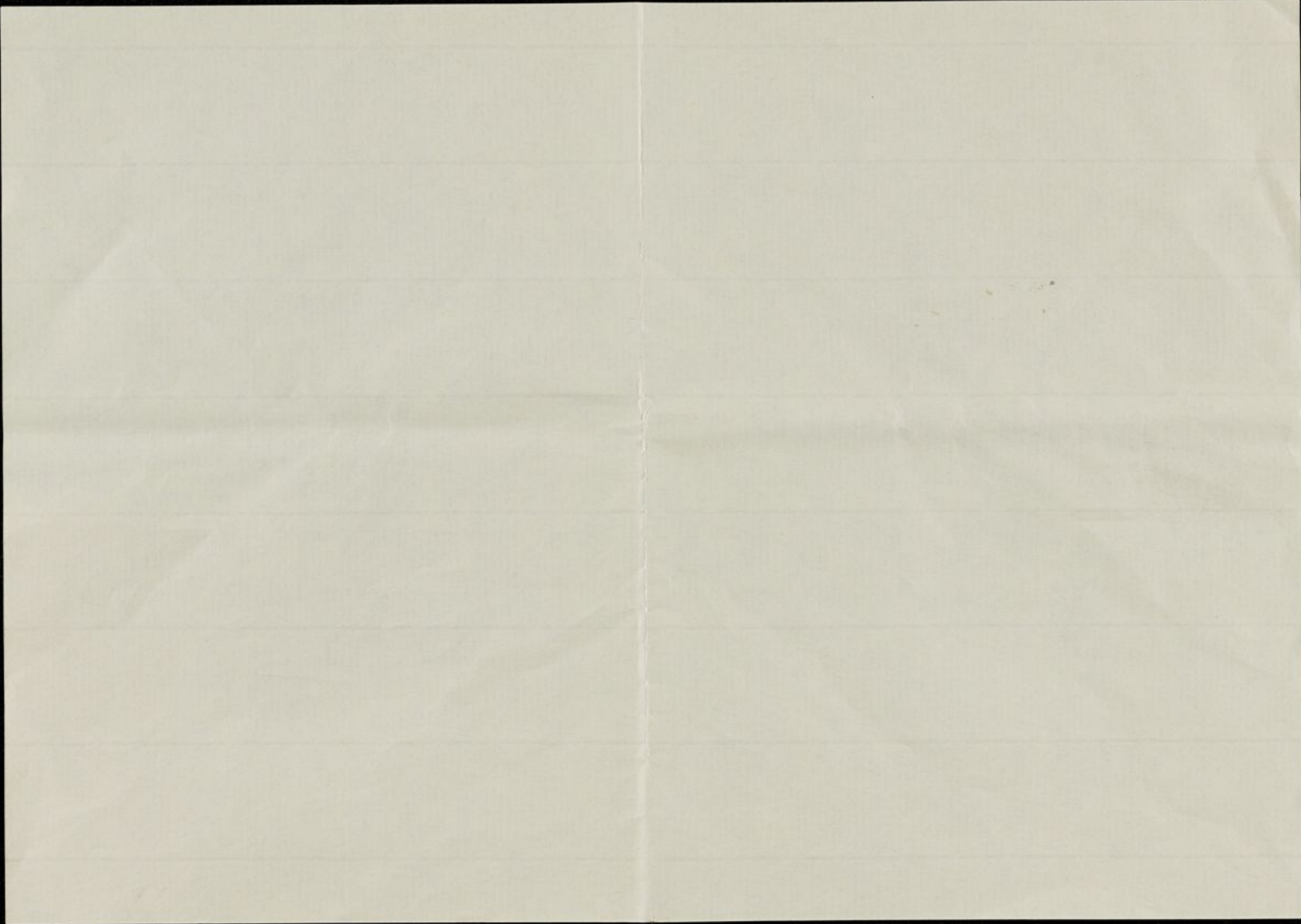
- a) fortunate in family  
& in neighbors from childhood  
no "apartheid" experience til  
fully formed. Then the shock.
- b) never acquired in racial  
hierarchy even when a victim of  
it.
- c) yet imagining "home" — where  
one belongs preoccupies me.  
home = safety



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- look beyond Othello as virile, gullible, emotional stud/warrior
  - a) his inability to "read" the culture he has entered is the plight of every recently arrived foreigner (Play is 3 hours)
  - b) this "cultural illiteracy" deprives him of real info:
    - cannot read tones/voice
    - body language
    - glances, nuance etc
    - is dependent on denotation
    - not connotation
  - c) Desdemona is not only his love - she is Venice to him  
she is "Home"