

**2016 Shakespeare Association of America Seminar:
“Masculinity and the Body in Contemporary Shakespearean Film and
Performance”**

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This seminar investigates the male body in contemporary Shakespearean film and performance. It builds on a recent call for a greater attention to be paid in adaptation studies to the male body as a source of meaning and an adaptive site in its own right; accordingly, the seminar directs attention to questions of corporeality, with a particular emphasis being placed on the multiplicity of constructions of maleness on screen and stage. Discussion might focus on – the celebrity body as it has been utilized in, for example, the Donmar production of *Hamlet* (dir. Michael Grandage, 2009), in which Jude Law played the title role; the queer body, as in the Shakespearean film adaptation, *Private Romeo* (dir. Alan Brown, 2011); the wounded male body, as in *Coriolanus* (dir. Ralph Fiennes, 2011); the sexualized body, as in *Henry V* (dir. Thea Sharrock, 2012); and the aging body, as in the Donmar production of *King Lear* (dir. Michael Grandage, 2010). Of particular interest might be the recent trend towards privileging militaristic bodies, as in the National Theatre *Othello* (dir. Nicholas Hytner, 2013), in which the Shakespearean hero’s physicality is mediated through camouflage. How does masculinity signify in these and related representations? What are the politics involved in the bodily branding of the Shakespearean protagonist? In what ways does race and/or nationality cut across the identification of the male body? Where does the focus on the male body leave women both in terms of dramatic representation and audience response? And to what extent is there a concentration on a handful of male body plays that affect conceptions of the canon? Papers on all aspects of male bodies, dead or alive, are warmly welcomed.

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Abstracts

Amy Bolis, University of Minnesota - *The Black Male Body: Intersections of Race and Masculinity in Othello: The Remix*

This paper will explore the complex relationship between race and masculinity in *Othello: The Remix*, a hip-hop version of *Othello* that premiered at the Globe to Globe Festival in 2012 as America's contribution and has since toured internationally to such prominent locations as Edinburgh, Sydney, Auckland, and Dubai. Although the production has garnered much critical acclaim for its use of hip-hop music to reinterpret *Othello*, I argue that multiple factors within the production coalesce to portray Othello as a hyper-masculine, dangerous, and superhuman character, thus reinforcing some of the most common stereotypes of African American males.

In this adaptation, the figure of Desdemona is physically absent throughout the play. She is represented instead by a disembodied voice that is prohibited the use of language and is only able to communicate by singing a series of decorative "oos" and "ahhs." I contend that this absence denies the audience exposure to some of Othello's more gentle qualities; qualities that are often brought out in him solely through his conversations and physical interactions with Desdemona in other versions of the play. Her absence starkly highlights and

reinforces the problematic image of the violent, sexually potent African American male by making a spectacle of Othello's body. Because Othello is the only visible presence on stage during many of their scenes together, he becomes the primary focus of these interactions, which only augments his physical aggression and verbal abuse towards Desdemona. Furthermore, *Othello: The Remix* is performed by an entirely male cast. But unlike some of the other company members, the actor playing Othello is not required to double as any of the lead female characters. Emilia and Bianca are both depicted as highly campy and comedic representations of women, helping to soften the masculine energy of the actors who embody them. Conversely, Othello's masculinity remains intact.

Finally, even the lyrics of the closing song in the production frame Othello as "alien" or "other," describing him as being from another planet, a "part of an extraterrestrial race." This characterization paints him as an outsider, a member of an unfamiliar and possibly dangerous community.

At a time when racial tensions in America are high, this production helps to feed the fears associated with the black male body; undermining its own project to humanize the character and solicit the audience's sympathy for him.

Andrew Bretz, University of Guelph - Prisons Within/Prisons Without: Rehabilitation and Abjection Narratives in *Mickey B*

In the 2007 Northern Irish adaptation of *Macbeth*, *Mickey B*, directed by Tom Magill and put together by the inmates of Maghaberry Prison, the bodies of the actors/prisoners are presented as ambivalent signifiers. On the one hand, the bodies are represented as subjects of the narrative of redemption and rehabilitation through personal agency, facilitated through an education in Shakespeare. Indeed, the mandate of the Educational Shakespeare Company is to "challenge perceptions, tackle social exclusion and change lives" (esc-film.com). The documentary "Growing Up with Violence," included in the DVD of the film, serves as an essay that articulates the rehabilitory goals of the project and the company by letting the actors tell their own stories. On the other hand, the film's unrelenting pessimism reinforces a narrative whereby it is impossible to ever escape the violence of carceral discipline. That is, the bodies of the prisoners are performing a dual tragedy in *Mickey B*; they are adapting the story of *Macbeth* to their own lives, yet in doing so, they cast their own lives as inescapable tragedies, always already subject to disciplinary forces beyond their control. This paper will show the bodies of the actors/prisoners to be internalized sites of negotiation between the two narratives of rehabilitation and abjection.

Maurizio Calbi, University of Salerno - "Mine own comforts": Troubled Media Masculinities in Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline* (2014) and Hammudi Al-Rahmoun Fonti's *Otel-lo* (2014)

In an important essay on the Shakespeare-on-film vogue of the 1990s, Peter Donaldson argues that in these films "media themes rise to the level of subject matter, vying for attention with and sometimes supplanting the story line of the source play." This media-inflected "Shakespearecentricity" (Burt) has undoubtedly increased at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which has led some critics to speak of a "post-textual" or "rhizomatic Shakespeare" (Lanier). The paper attempts to address the (potential) interaction between screen masculinities and this marked self-reflexivity in two media-saturated, contemporary films. In Ethan Hawke's *Cymbeline* (2014), an updated version of Shakespeare's play in which Briton bikers, led by drug kingpin Cymbeline, come into conflict with Rome police, the introduction of various media technologies (from iPad to iPhone, from radio to retro-TV sets, etc.) exposes male corporeality as a disordered and unruly construct (see Orkin on

Pericles), and re-marks the volatility of male bonds. In Hammudi Al-Rahmoun Fonti's *Othello* (2014), an independent film about the making of an *Othello* film, the intrusive presence of a "sadistic," Iago-like director allows the film to dwell on multiple processes of abjection (including male abjection). Participating in the well-established filmic tradition in which the Shakespearean text "invades" the "real life" of film characters, the film brings (back) into focus a sense of bonds between men as racialized mechanisms of inclusion *and* exclusion.

William C. Carroll, Boston University - "The King's Three Bodies: Masculine Sovereignty in Films of *Macbeth*"

This paper analyzes contradictory representations of Duncan's sovereign body, both in the play-text and in several film and television versions of *Macbeth*. On the one hand, his body is frequently idealized as "gracious"; just after the murder, however, Macbeth had termed Duncan's mutilated body "a new Gorgon." Like the Ghost-king in *Hamlet*, Duncan's body is both gracious and sacred ("the Lord's anointed temple") yet at the same time disturbingly material ("who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?") and horrifying. Hence the play's post-mortem interest in his corpse's location ("Where is Duncan's body?" MACDUFF "Carried to Colmekill, / The sacred storehouse of his predecessors / And guardian of their bones"). Some film versions conceive of Duncan as a martial, even heroic figure (e.g. Polanski), in spite of Holinshed's account of a weak king and his passivity in Shakespeare's play, while other versions accent his age or fragility (e.g. BBC, Sher). The paradoxical nature of the king's body in early modern thought is revealed in modern films that cannot quite capture the multiple aspects of his body.

Michael D. Friedman, University of Scranton - "Keep your head": Almercyda's *Cymbeline* and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"

Director Michael Almercyda's film version of *Cymbeline* (2014) entirely ignores the material in Shakespeare's play dealing with British, Roman, and Welsh historiography that has so fascinated modern critics. Rather, Almercyda relocates the action to America, where the "Britons," a motorcycle gang, refuse to pay bribes as "tribute" to the Roman Police Force. Within this context, the director replaces Shakespeare's references to myths about Britain's ancient past, its subjugation to the Roman Empire, and its Renaissance nation-building with a uniquely American mythological structure: the story that forms the basis for the contemporary celebration of Halloween, Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Aside from setting the events of the plot during the week of October 31, with Halloween trappings in constant sight, Almercyda seizes upon the figure of the Headless Horseman (Brom Bones) as an analogue for Cloten, the Queen's son, who competes with Posthumus (Ichabod Crane) for the love of Imogen (Katrina von Tassel), but ultimately loses his head to Guiderius, the king's long-lost son. Since Imogen takes the headless trunk for that of her beloved husband, Posthumus, the film portrays the masculine body as that which may receive wounds, even decapitation, and yet survive to win the hand of an eligible heiress.

Ann M. Martinez, Kent State University at Stark - "From Warriors to Weepers: Kingly Depictions of *Macbeth* and *Henry V* in Film"

The layered depiction of kingly bodies in recent Shakespearean film adaptations is the focus of this paper. In both *Henry V* (dir. Thea Sharrock, 2012) and *Macbeth* (dir. Justin Kurzel, 2015), the kingly body is at the center of the film pulling in and holding the audience's gaze. Invariably weaponized as warrior kings, with their militaristic prowess on display, these royal bodies are also sexualized, often through the use of the celebrity body, and finally humanized through deliberate emotional outpouring. The layered masculinity embodied by Henry V and Macbeth (played by Tom Hiddleston and Michael Fassbender, respectively) comes at a time

when masculinity is questioned and challenged (i.e., hegemonic masculinity), and when different types of masculinity appear on the social landscape (e.g., metrosexual masculinity, lumbersexual masculinity). In depicting the socio-cultural masculinity of the present moment, these films underscore a distinct notion of royal masculinity, and provide a complex amalgamation on display for the audience.

Katharine Ormsby, University of Connecticut, Storrs - “Playing the Gangster in Contemporary Film Adaptations of *Macbeth*”

This paper explores the consequences of adapting Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* as a gangster film, with particular attention to the body of the gangster and the construction of masculinity through violence. Beginning with Ken Hughes’s *Joe MacBeth* (1955), *Macbeth* has been frequently reimagined as a gangster. With its emphasis on the corrupting power of ambition and its constant questioning of what it means to be a man, *Macbeth* is well-suited to the gangster genre, which explores similar themes. Robert Warshaw described the gangsters found in Hollywood crime films of the 1920s and 1930s as “men with guns.” The male-dominated gangster genre is preoccupied with men asserting, defending, and imposing their masculinity through violence, while also suggests that the qualities associated with masculinity are socially constructed rather than biological determined. Therefore, gangsters anxiously affirm their manhood through hyper-masculine shows of dominance and bravado. Contemporary gangster film adaptations include: William Reilly’s *Men of Respect* (1990), Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* (2003), and Geoffrey Wright’s *Macbeth* (2006). (Billy Morrisette’s *Scotland, PA* [2001] also draws on the gangster film genre through its allusions to the Coen brothers’ *Fargo* [1996].) The *Macbeths* in these films “play” at being gangsters, adopting the clothing, language, and accessories established by the genre. My analysis of the films will focus on how these *Macbeths* are physically presented as gangsters through generic tropes and how this updating of the Scottish feudal warlord to an urban gangster with a gun reflects contemporary concerns regarding masculinity and violence.

Jennifer Page, Northwestern Oklahoma State University - The Masculine Body and Social Capital in Ralph Fiennes’ *Coriolanus*

In Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*, we see the male body fetishized for its strength, persistence, and imperviousness. The text demonstrates through Coriolanus’ body, primarily his battle scars, the connection between gender performance and perceived individual and social value. The scars are visual proof of his martial valor, and therefore, sufficient masculinity. Ralph Fiennes’ 2010 film adaptation of the play dramatizes (although “exaggerates” may be more accurate) the acquisition of these scars in numerous fight scenes typical of the androcentric action film genre. An early meeting between Coriolanus and Aufidius showcases the characters in a brutal knife fight, crashing through window panes and wrestling in an arguably (and I will argue it) homoerotic scene. In others scenes where Coriolanus exudes superiority and authority, in interactions with citizens and military underlings for example, Fiennes’ costuming, posture, and mannerisms magnify Coriolanus’ brash, militaristic version of masculinity even when his scars are not the camera’s primary focus. The film’s cinematography—similar to a war movie and peppered with newsreel highlights—amplifies the overwhelmingly masculine tone of the script and actors’ performances.

These obvious aspects of hypermasculinity aside, the masculine body and Coriolanus’ scars also lead to the creation or negation of meaningful social interactions. Coriolanus’ scars (read: masculinity) define his self-perception, his relationship with his family, and his value to the citizens of Rome. Fiennes’ occasionally awkward and stilted performance contrasts his more frequent bravado and underscores the character’s emotional vulnerability and inability

to make connections despite, or perhaps because of, his scars. Fiennes' portrayal of the "lonely dragon" in situations off the battlefield demonstrates Coriolanus' self-imposed isolation from the community that would happily accept him for his body alone.

William Reginald Rampone, South Carolina State University - Masculinity and the Male Body in *The Taming of the Shrew*

This particular iteration of *The Taming of the Shrew* which was originally directed by William Ball and Kirk Browning as part of their American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco and which was later filmed as part of the New York Great Performances Theatre for America in 1976 should not be only celebrated for its marvelous sense of the commedia del arte in early modern Italy, but moreover, it should be remembered by all theatre-goers for its strikingly dynamic use of the bare-chested figure of Petruchio, who is made as much a figure of erotic desire as Kate, maybe even more so. The time of this play's production was one in which provocative representations of male bodies in both film and theatre in America were emerging. The male body was becoming increasingly represented as an object of not only female erotic desire but gay male erotic desire as well. In this filmed stage production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the focus of viewers' attention is clearly directed toward the some times shirtless male body of Petruchio while at the same other male characters' bodies stand as foils in relation to his own stunningly sculpted physique. The purpose of this paper is to determine how various power relations are constructed in relation to multiple male bodies in this film text and perhaps in relation to other various renditions of this play as performed on stage.

Amy Scott-Douglass, Marymount University - Shakespeare vs. ISIS: Political Contagion on Screen and What We Might Learn from Shakespeare's Ethics of Contagion Management

We are now living in a time of political contagion. At the current time in history, *screens*, originally invented to entertain, to inform, and to aid us, now have the potential to terrorize us. Video executions, beheadings on YouTube, militants recruiting via social media—violence is viral, and we need only power on our phones, computers, and televisions to be reminded of that.

In Shakespeare's plays, contagions of love and its discontents (such as jealousy, wrath, and lust) are caught through the eyes. One catches these diseases just as quickly, according to Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, as "one catche[s] the plague" or, in the case of Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*, who is "exceeding ill" the morning after she has fallen in love with Benedick, a sudden and extreme "cold" (3.4.50, 42). However, political contagions in Shakespeare—including reigns of tyranny, conspiracies, uprisings and revolutions, assassination plots, and public executions—are breathed in and infect the sufferer's mind, growing progressively more severe over time. The repeated imagery is that during the dark of night, the graveyards are opened, and the breath of the corpses is spread throughout the thick, wet, contaminated air. "'Tis now the very witching time of night," Hamlet informs us, as he watches Claudius on his knees at prayer and soliloquizes about assassinating him, "When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out / Contagion to this world" (3.2.350-52). In my 2016 SAA paper, I am interested in exploring representations of hyper-masculinity as it intersects with moments of violent manifestations of political contagion in *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Richard III*, and *Macbeth* films. Several of these plays center on speech that "goes viral"—speech that spreads out of control, tongues that are infected and that have the potential to infect their auditors. In my paper, I discuss spreadable media as a tool of violence: beheadings via laptop in Michael Almyreda's *Hamlet*, video executions in Ralph

Fiennes' *Coriolanus*, smart-phone threats and news blog leaks in the *Richard III*-inspired web series *House of Cards*.

In addition to analyzing moments of hyper-masculinity and violence from political contagion in these films and shows, I am interested in the larger question: *What can we learn from Shakespeare's ethics of contagion management?* In *Coriolanus*, the First Senator said that when it comes to containing political contagion, we must proceed "the humane way" (327). I am interested in an in-depth exploration of what "the humane way" is—what *Shakespeare* thinks "the humane way" is—not simply as an intellectual exercise but potentially as a means to thinking differently about how to combat terror. What, if anything, is there in Shakespeare-on-screen that could help us to reclaim our screens?

Adele Seeff, University of Maryland - "Masculinity"

I would like to look at the black body as inscribed in the canon of film and television adaptations of Shakespeare and in one stage performance and at their contribution to both expanding the canon and inscribing Shakespeare as a body of texts in (elite) and popular culture.

I plan to explore a black Edmund in an Africanized made-for-television version of *King Lear* (*Izingane Zobaba*) in 2008 in South Africa; Othello in a post-dramatic version of *Othello* in which a black dancer/actor from West Africa performed Othello with one other cast member, a German actress who played Desdemona and translated into English the French of the Othello; and, finally Harold Perrineau's drag performance of a black Mercutio in Baz Lurmann's *Romeo + Juliet*. What socio-political encoding do these performances suggest and how do they contribute to making meaning in an ever-expanding canon?

Edel Semple, University College Cork - "Make you a sword of me": Military masculinity in *Coriolanus* (2011) and *Macbeth* (2015)

This paper will explore the inscription and impact of military identity on the male body in two recent Shakespeare films: Fiennes' *Coriolanus* (2011) and Kurzel's *Macbeth* (2015). In both of these films, warfare exacts a severe psychological toll and the indelible physical cost of soldierly life is equally high. Male bodies are shown wounded, bleeding, bruised, grimy, scarred, shell-shocked, dying and dead. Each film also presents the male body as a weapon: Fiennes' *Coriolanus* instructs his men to "Make you a sword of me!"; while Fassbender's *Macbeth* is Duncan's instrument of violence, deployed and manoeuvred at his command. Of course, weapons are a kind of tool and they may be used against the agents that wield them. In *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth*, the protagonists are shown to be apparatuses of aggression that will inevitably turn against their masters. Having been used by the state, society, and their own families, the titular heroes are rendered exterior to these structures and their inherent isolationism and individualism is exacerbated. Moreover in these two films, *Coriolanus*' and *Macbeth*'s soldiership makes them victims of the state, rather than their own personal flaws and decisions. Furthermore, in both of these films, 'soldier' is not simply an occupation or temporary experience; rather, it is a permanent and all-consuming identity. Being a soldier overwhelms all other aspects of the self, including the roles of son, husband, and father. Thus, Fassbender's *Macbeth* goes home but never really leaves the battlefield, while Fiennes' *Coriolanus* cannot cope with life away from the frontline and his single effort to play the diplomat, by brokering peace, has fatal consequences. Yet, the societies of these films demand a masculinity that is versatile and adaptable, a hero that is all things to all people, and war is an experience in which such a masculinity can develop and be interrogated and tested. For all their hypermasculinity though, *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus* ultimately fail the test; they are and can only be soldiers, and their deaths are presented not as a natural outcome of their engagement in war, but as the penalty for their inability to be the 'all-rounder' male that society requires. While the protagonists' deaths bring an end to their stories, Fiennes' and

Kurzel's films refuse to offer clear-cut answers to the questions they raise and their final scenes deny any sense of closure. Masculinity remains in crisis, conflicted, and the ideal male is an absent presence.

Philippa Sheppard, University of Toronto - The Emasculated Military Body in Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* (2015) and Oliver Parker's *Othello* (1995)

The conduct books of the early modern period, from Castiglione's *The Courtier* onwards, codify manliness as chiefly exhibited through military prowess and paternity. "Honour," achieved mainly through martial combat and unbroken family lineage, is the badge of elite masculinity. However, honour is lost through threats to family dynasty, which Shakespeare's protagonists, Macbeth and Othello both confront. Both warrior-heroes are childless. Macbeth is told by the prophetic witches that his kingly line will perish with him; Othello is hoodwinked into believing that his wife has dishonoured him and imperilled the legitimacy of his future heirs through adultery.

How do modern film-makers negotiate the breach between early modern attitudes to manliness and those of contemporary audiences? Kurzel and Parker both focus on images of the male body in a vulnerable state to convey the loss of honour, and its attendant wounding of masculinity. Both directors show the male body, first triumphant in its martial form (masculinity literally branded on the skin in the form of battle scars), then humbled as a consequence of a lack of offspring, and love for a woman. Military manuals and conduct books of the time warn men, particularly soldiers, against the effeminizing effect of women's erotic power. Lady Macbeth's emasculating rhetoric is instrumental in setting Macbeth on his disastrous course. Macbeth views himself as stripped of his powers by the riddles of the witches. Othello is undone by his jealousy over his wife's supposed unfaithfulness.

The film-makers produce a plethora of images of the emasculated warrior's body. Kurzel's Macbeth (Michael Fassbender) appears as mad as his wife, riding off in the middle of the night to visit the witches clad only in a thin white nightgown (Lady Macbeth's traditional lunatic garb) his pale legs and bare feet vulnerable to the harsh gorse and cold fog. He is infantilized by the constant identification of him with his dead sons, or dead versions of himself, in the initial funeral for his child, on the battlefield, with the witches, and in his wife's diseased mind. Even his sexual penetration of his wife is conditional on his listening to her plot to kill Duncan as she pleasures him, then he collapses on her chest. Parker's Othello (Laurence Fishburne) suffers from epilepsy, his condition emphasized more in the film than in the play. His body is shown wracked by seizures or confined behind bars. His body is also made vulnerable by its otherness – the only black body in a sea of white ones. In each film, the protagonists are increasingly shown on the ground, sitting or lying, while others stand around them. Their bodies are literally brought low by the diminution of their honour, a consequence of their own "unmanly" fears about the infidelity of those around them.

Liberty S. Stanavage, SUNY Potsdam - Race and the Performing Body: Responses to Fishburne, Stewart, and Ejiofor's Othellos

In this paper, I intend to examine stage productions starring Chiwetel Ejiofor (2007-8) and Patrick Stewart (1997) as Othello, and the 1995 film starring Lawrence Fishburne, in conversation with critical responses, to consider tensions around race, emotion, and physicality that deflect our understanding of Othello and Iago.

Modern productions of *Othello* must negotiate enduring cultural stereotypes of African hyper-sexuality and anger and a gendered virgin/whore dichotomy that make it harder to access Shakespeare's nuanced and often contradictory handling of stereotypes about Africans and Middle-Easterners in early modern England. The inclusion of actual black bodies in the role of the Moor, rather than exoticized white ones, parallels a tendency of productions to

heighten Othello's sexuality and potential for violence. Discussions about modern productions often depict Othello as frenzied or inherently insecure even as they simultaneously attribute the flaws in his character to Iago's brilliant manipulation.

Audience responses to the play can provide us with a lens to interrogate this increased focus on the physicality of the black actor playing Othello versus the malicious white intellect of Iago. Frequently, this focus presents itself in a dramatic contrast between the physically dominating Othello, and the much slighter but scheming Iago, a contrast that problematically echoes contemporary American cultural stereotypes of black male bodies. As the NY Times review of Fishburne's Othello suggested: "If there's a hint of Ike Turner (whom he played brilliantly in 'What's Love Got to Do With It?') to this Othello's jealous fury, that seems to be very much what Mr. Parker had in mind."ⁱ

Notably, the Patrick Stewart "photo negative" production of Othello reversed this visual, with Iago being physically larger, albeit "A paunchy, graying figure"ⁱⁱ. Stewart's Othello was markedly less violently passionate than Fishburne's, a trait for which he was praised for creating a more universal Othello "He creates a beautifully delineated portrait of a plain-spoken man of action who turns out to have rotten nerves"ⁱⁱⁱ

Against this typing, the Donmar Warehouse production of Othello, starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, was noted by critics for presenting a strikingly different Othello, as one critic argues: "Ejiofor eschews the trend to portray Othello as some latent psychopath. His verse-speaking is first-rate, his dignified, softly-spoken Moor always compelling."^{iv} Strikingly, this performance is simultaneously hailed as "refreshingly classical" and "extraordinary and historic."^v Ejiofor's articulate and dignified Othello is framed by one critic as a "the play restored to its 17th-century origins" while another describes it as an "extraordinarily fresh and new-minted production."^{vi} This restraint is not universally received, however, "he short changes the audience when it comes to depicting the humiliating agonies of sexual jealousy."^{vii} His counterpart Iago, by contrast, is largely criticized for presenting an Iago that is more charming than sinister.

I suspect that these responses themselves highlight the problematic racial politics that surround Othello's masculine identity, particularly in contrast to reactions to Stewart's less passionate version of the character. Here tensions arise around a literal black body that resists aggressive typing as inherently over-sexualized and fiery, a contrast that evokes a central tension of the play itself.

Catherine (Cassie) Thomas, Georgia Gwinnett College - Gangster, Beefcake, Bro: Desiring Omi in Bhardwaj's *Omkara*

This paper will analyze the portrayal of male bodies in director Vishal Bhardwaj's film adaptation of *Othello*, *Omkara* (2006). Multiple scenes—through camera angles and zooms, costuming (or lack thereof), and blocking--voyeuristically focus on the bodies of Omi (Othello), Langda (Iago), Kesu (Cassio), and Rajju (Roderigo). Additionally, Bollywood-esque musical numbers and background songs detail the men's, and especially, Omi's, warrior prowess and passionate desires. The film's insistent highlighting of male desire (heterosexual, homosocial, and homoerotic) opens up a racially and sexually queer space of interaction between the characters, as well as the characters and audience. I will unpack several key moments in the film that allow us to understand the performance politics and critical consequences of making the men of *Omkara* into (sex) objects for popular consumption.

ⁱ Maslin, Janet. "Fishburne and Branagh Meet Their Fate in Venice." *NY Times*. December 14, 1995. nytimes.com. Web. December 13, 2015.

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