

FROM VENICE TO CYPRUS: BIFOCAL STRUCTURE OF "OTHELLO"

The essay deals with the specificity of dramatic conflict in Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello". **The racial conflict, which determines the events of the first act, must be taken into consideration.** This collision does not coincide with the pivotal conflict of the whole play. The relationships between these two conflicts and the role of some characters in the creating the artistic unity are analysed here.

The exploration of the tragedy's spatial and temporal construction convinces of the certain contentional and formal autonomy of the first act. That Venetian act can be examined as a little independent drama with all the main elements of dramatic structure. Speaking in the normative theory's terms, we can find here an exposition (the dialogue between Iago and Roderigo), a beginning (Brabantio's anger), a climax (the speeches in the Senate) and even a dénouement (Duke's and Senate's decision).

Meanwhile the drama limited by the frame of the first act is a tragedy neither in content nor in form. The first act is to great extent an epical one, but the tragedy itself begins later in the Cyprus scenes. It is not accidentally, that the second act opens with the storm, which is, though, rather kind to the characters of the play. G. Wilson Knight, who had investigated the symbology of this scene, showed that it foreshadows – in analogy and in contrast – human storms with tragic ends and at the same time plays the structural part of the *beginning*. Definition of this scene as a *beginning* already emphasizes the presence of some border between the first act and four others.

The comparative independence of the first act is caused not so much by the place of action, as by its own collision, which does not coincide with the main conflict of the whole tragedy.