

《奥赛罗》：偶像崇拜和故事叙述

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[英文提要]

For Protestants in the time of Shakespeare, words as well as pictures could be seen as comprising images. Moreover, such images could serve legitimate purposes, as do “poesie” and the poetic imagination in Sidney’s theory and as does the literary “monument” of Shakespeare’s own works. Such images must not, however, be idolized, a point emphasized by the Reformed (and English) version of the Ten Commandments which forbids the worshipping of “graven images”. The essence of idolatry is falsehood; it “changes the truth into a lie, and worships the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1).

Attempts to replace or “paint over” reality by means of images may occur in the realm of ethics and psychology as well as in that of theology, and may have similarly tragic consequences. Shakespeare’s Othello exemplifies a tendency common to his race—the human race—to make and value false images (in his case verbal, narrative images) to the displacement of truth. Desdemona’s image of him and, it seems, his image of himself are

based on such attractive but ultimately delusory “painted words”. To locate Othello’s tragic guilt in his deceptive (and self-deceptive) attempt to construct and monumentalize himself narratively is thus to locate the essence of his tragedy not primarily in his cultural circumstances but in himself, and in a flaw that is characteristic not of a specific class or race of human beings but of humankind universally.

[题记]

“上帝也的确预言过，在以后的岁月里，会出现坚持偶像崇拜的男人。偶像崇拜的方式不仅是用五颜六色的色彩，而且运用丰富多彩的语言。”^①

我的主题是形象和叙述。众所周知，视觉形象可以讲述一个故事；一个故事也可以描绘出一幅画面。然而，在新教改革时期，总是突出地强调形象的危险性，包括它在宗教和道德上的危险性。而且，正如以上题记所引用的那样，由于“丰富多彩的语言”和生动的视觉画面具有同样的功能，此类言语——此类叙述——在16~17世纪就因其可能带来的危险性而受到新教徒格外仔细的审查。我在这里想要指出的是，这些危险性也延伸到了戏剧表现和实际生活中我们所谓的悲剧之中。我尤其希望通过莎士比亚的伟大悲剧《奥赛罗》揭示并阐明一种叙述形象或“想象叙述”，这种形象或叙述就其最阴暗的意义而言，乃是一种虚假歪曲和悲剧性欺骗的方式，包括自欺。

^① 托马斯·克兰麦：《教义问答：基督教简明指南》，伦敦，1548年。