

Comparative study othello and o essay

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William Shakespeare's play Othello and Tim Blake Nelson's contemporary appropriation O both portray universal themes that are relevant to their contexts. Both composers used a variety of techniques to effectively explore various themes and values in their text. Although the values of each composer's time have changed as time progressed, many themes are still evident in both texts.

These include jealousy, racism and appearance versus reality, however the techniques used by both composers that differ greatly. The themes which are common in texts - jealousy, racism and appearance versus reality - are conveyed through the use of different techniques. Shakespeare used literary devices such as imagery, soliloquies and asides to suit his contemporary Elizabethan audience. Tim Blake Nelson on the other hand, utilized a variety of film techniques such as different camera work, sound effects and editing to suit his 21st century adolescent audience. However what can be clearly seen in both texts are the values which were considered important in their owner's time period. In Shakespeare's Othello, the theme of jealous is evident throughout the play.

Shakespeare uses techniques such as characterisation and imagery to illustrate this theme. By characterising his characters with jealousy, Shakespeare effectively emphasises the destructive power of jealousy, which corrupts the values of honour and trust. In Othello, the protagonist is characterised as a general who has a high social status, a man who is known as the "valiant," "more fair than black" Moor and a respected member of the Venetian society. This is contrasted with the Moor towards the end of the tragedy, who is enraged with jealousy and utter disgust for Desdemona,

even calling her an “ Impudent strumpet! Despite Desdemona’s constant pleas of being innocent and faithful, Othello’s mind becomes so corrupted by Iago that the once calm and honourable figure, seems to lose control of his mind, working himself up and eventually falling into a trance “ Lie with her? Lie on her?... Handkerchief! - Oh, devil! - (falls into a trance) Act 4 Scene 1.

The contrast in character, at various points in the play further emphasises the destructive nature and power of jealousy, however it is also a reflection of the values of Shakespeare’s contemporary context. Shakespeare uses the negative effects of jealousy to effectively present the values of fidelity and chastity, and also to demonstrate the importance of these values in the Elizabethan society. Shakespeare uses imagery such as the “ green eyed monster which doth mock the meat It feeds on” to describe jealousy as a monster itself, which is effective in highlighting the destructive nature of jealousy. On the other hand, Tim Blake Nelson uses techniques such as superimposition, music and different camera shots in *O* to convey his theme of jealousy. The composer of *O* uses the popular medium of cinema as well as the use of register (colloquial language, slang and profanities) to suit is contemporary adolescent audience. In *O*, the noble moor becomes the hawk’s basketball team MVP, Odin James, who is a elite athlete who was transferred to a expensive private school. In the sex scene, the use of non diegetic sound along as well as superimposition is used. Tim Blake Nelson uses non diegetic sounds in the “ willow” scene, “ Even the sun goes down Heroes eventually die” these lyrics are a foreshadowing of the death of the tragic her.

In the sex scene Othello looks into the mirror and sees his own body looking back instead of his own, the audience is given a look into Othello's mind as it is a point of view shot. It effectively shows the effects of jealousy, as it is clear now that Othello's jealousy is beginning to corrupt his mind. The techniques used in this scene are effective in showing the consequences of jealousy as well as demonstrating the difference in values between Shakespeare's and Tim Blake Nelson's society. In Othello, Shakespeare represents the theme "illusion vs reality" through the characterisation of Iago. Shakespeare employs devices such as dramatic irony and soliloquies. Since the beginning of the play, Iago is quickly known to the audience that he's the villain. In Othello, the deception arises from Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony; Othello constantly refers to him as "honest Iago".

However the audience is made aware that he is indeed not honest at all, from such quotes such as "I am not what I am" and "In following him I follow but myself. In many scenes throughout the play, Iago is seen acting as Othello's most loyal friend, Iago helps him find "proof" of Desdemona being unfaithful to him, as he advises him to keep an eye on her. However these scenes are juxtaposed with short scenes in which Shakespeare uses soliloquies, in which Iago shares with the audience his real plans.

These scenes very effectively convey the theme of illusion vs reality as Iago creates the "illusion" of being Othello's loyal and trustworthy friend.

However they also emphasise a key value in Shakespeare's context, which is the value of trust, Iago's "services" to his Othello, are seen as an honourable thing to do. Similarly in O, Tim Blake Nelson uses

characterisation and dramatic irony to convey the theme of Illusion vs reality, however because of the different context's the techniques used differ greatly. In O, Iago becomes Hugo, a teenage boy who craves for the attention of others " All my life, I always wanted to fly. " In O, the use of dramatic irony is also very important.

Odin has complete trust in Hugo and believes what he says to be true. In the " gym scene" dramatic irony is used in the quote " Say what you gotta say player," this quote demonstrates the " two-faced" personality of Hugo as the term " player" in the contemporary context, shows respect and trust, however it also reflects the real personality of Hugo. Similarly, when Michael Cassio asks Hugo for advise, they converse about reputation. Hugo replies with a quick " Like who gives a fuck about reputation, the only person you have to answer to is yourself", this quote not only represents Hugo as a true Machiavellian villain, but it also highlights the theme of illusion vs reality.

This effectively represents the values important to Tim Blake Nelson's contemporary society, instead of Shakespeare's values of integrity and reputation, in O's context is more to do with popularity and image. Hugo is also made to be seen as a trustworthy friend, who is trusted by both Michael and Odin, this demonstrates the of illusion vs reality because in actual fact he is only using them to his own advantage, Tim Blake Nelson effectively presents this through the use of Mis en Scene and Dramatic irony which is seen throughout the movie as it is present in the original play by Shakespeare. In conclusion, both composers from different contexts have used a variety of techniques to explore the themes of jealousy and illusion vs

reality. However the techniques used by each composer varies significantly, Shakespeare's Othello used literary devices such as dramatic irony and soliloquies to suit is contemporary Elizabethan audience. Tim Blake Nelson's O on the other hand uses the popular medium of cinema along with " pop" music and a variety of camera work to suit his 21st century contemporary adolescent audience. Both texts are similar however, in that they portray universal themes and values that are relevant to their contexts.