

Jealousy in othello: the cause of chaos

Literature, Russian Literature



Jealousy can be found everywhere around us. Between the ones we love, or even between the ones we hate. Jealousy may also serve different purposes. It can be used as building blocks to build up the relationship, but it can act as a hurricane and blow everything down. In William Shakespeare's Othello, the namesake protagonist's tragic flaws are possessiveness, insecurity, and loyalty, which fail to serve his ability to see past his feelings. Othello's first tragic flaw is possessiveness. Othello was a high-ranking soldier who worked in the army, which would have increased his masculinity in comparison to other men.

This may be a reason for developing the idea of men being greater and more powerful than women. This idea of him being at a higher level may have resulted him into thinking that he possessed Desdemona, and that nobody else could have her if he could not. "Sexual possessiveness come from male personality traits, and that the traditional perception of masculinity indicates that male has full power, and control, which runs counter to his dependency upon his wife" (Ben Zeev). Othello explains that the reason he killed Desdemona was because of her affair with Cassio. "Ay with Cassio, Had he been true, If heaven would make me such another world Of one entire and perfect chrysolite, I'd not have sold her for it" (5. 2. 155~158). He ended up killing Desdemona because of his possessiveness. If she loved Cassio then she needs to be killed, even though he tells Emilia that he loved Desdemona so much that he would not have traded her for anything in the world. Othello's envious emotion overpowered his actions, not just because of his possessive attribute, but also because of his insecurity. Othello was different than everyone else in Venice and Cyprus.

Because was a Moor, he was constantly bashed upon with racial comments and was treated unfair because of his race. “ Whether a maid so tender, fair and happy, So opposite to marriage that she shunned The Wealthy curled darlings of our nation, Would ever have, t’incure a general mock, Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom Of such a thing as thou-“ (1. 2. 69~74). Barbantio, the father of Desdemona, was against his daughter’s marriage because Othello was black. Despite Othello’s high social status, rank, money and respect, Barbantio refused to accept Othello as his son-in-law. Now for want of these required conveniences, her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to have gorge, disrelish and abhor the moor. Very nature will instruct her in it and compel her to some second choice” (2. 1. 11~16). Iago said this to Othello, persuading him of the rumour between Desdemona and Cassio was due to Othello’s race. Iago states that Desdemona will soon find a man like her own, and leave Othello, because he is ‘ different’. “ When the man perceives the woman to be his whole world, he feels that any separation from her entails a loss of his own identity” (Ben-Zeev).

When Othello believed that the affair between Cassio and Desdemona was true, he could have felt like he lost his identity, making him insecure and more vulnerable to jealousy. Lastly, Othello’s tragic flaw is that he is loyal. Othello was a very honorable man, and trusted Iago, a little too much. This is shown when Othello repeats “ Honest Iago” numerous times throughout the play. Iago tried to destroy Othello with his cunning words and actions, by betraying and abusing Othello’s trust, persuading him into thinking that he was an ‘ honest’ man. “ I think thou dost.

And for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st breath" (3. 3. 123~125). It is not wrong to say that Othello's insecurities developed his trust towards Iago. When you are insecure, one of the escape routes you choose is to depend on someone else. If you have no one to trust, then you can feel fear and paranoia, and to get rid of these emotions, your instinct is to rely on someone else (Wilder). Othello's insecurities lead to Othello's reliance towards Iago, and his faith and loyalty prevented him from seeing past his jealous feelings.

As a tragic hero, Othello has tragic flaws, and his flaws make him more vulnerable towards jealousy. Throughout the play, Othello showed three traits: his possessiveness towards Desdemona, insecurity towards himself and loyalty towards Iago. These three characteristics created a home for the green-eyed monster to grow bigger, and create chaos. Othello's jealous feelings grew so big that it could not be controlled. Jealousy can be a healthy to maintain a relationship between two people, but if it is abused, it can be dangerous.