

# Term paper on othello the moor

Literature, Russian Literature



## **Introduction**

For a character to qualify as a tragic hero, he or she must not entirely be of good character or a completely evil character. Rather, he or she must be a good person but who contributes to own destruction due to some fatal flaw or some moral weakness.

Othello by Shakespeare is the perfect exemplification of a tragic hero. In the beginning of the story, Shakespeare portrays Othello as a consummate leader of the military whose thoughts are essentially governed by reason and logic. He has everything at his disposal. He had enormous success at war and is one of the most decorated military men in Venice. In spite of the fact that he is a Moor of African descent; he has risen over the ranks to become a very reputable general in Italy (Adams 34). Although he is surrounded by a predominantly white population his sheer attitude, determination, and bravery makes him stand out. All the major characters in the play with the exception of Brabantio and Iago refer to him with extreme goodness and nobility.

Othello however possesses a major flaw. He has the undesirable tendency of taking up everything that he lays his eyes on and also believing everything that he is informed of without even questioning some of the circumstance that surround that information (Bradley 23). This would in fact prove to be one the reasons for his downfall.

Iago, who is an officer below the rank of Othello, realizes this imperfection and capitalizes on it. Iago engages in a web of lies and deception that inadvertently cause the wisdom of Othello to be taken over by jealousy and anger. Iago has feels resentment towards Othello for choosing another

officer for promotion over him and he endeavors to make life a living hell for Othello. Iago makes such a good and formidable adversary because he knows Othello so well that he is able to strike him where he will hurt and feel the pain the most. Iago consequently pursues Desdemona who is Othello's love of his life. The exploitation of Othello by Iago plays a significant part in the tragic ending of the story.

However, the downfall of Othello cannot be entirely blamed on Iago's actions. It is indeed true that Iago is the major instigator. However, Othello is himself much to blame for his downfall, even more than the treacherous acts of his servant.

The love of Desdemona therefore serves as an emasculator of Othello. This assertion by Othello is a classical representation of stereotypical gender functions or roles reversal where the man saves the woman and not vice versa. This can therefore be used to explain why Othello refers to Desdemona as his own 'fair warrior' when they first meet after Othello has been away at war (Adams 52).

Othello further highlights his insecurities about the love of Desdemona. He actually feels unworthy of this love and consequently, when the marriage prospect faces him, he displays a lack of self-confidence and refuses to believe that a woman like Desdemona could love him truly because of the color of his skin. All these factors make it even easier for Iago to convince him that Desdemona loves Cassius and not him. His fragile state of mind causes him to develop massive anger and jealousy. Othello's actions can however be understood because of the extreme prejudice in Venice that surrounded him everyday.

It is arguable that Othello was just waiting for the prompting of Iago for his happiness dream to come crashing down. This is because Othello had already convinced himself in his mind that he did not deserve Desdemona's love and there was therefore no way that she could truly love him. Hence, at the slightest push, Othello is prepared to act as judge and punisher of the single person in the entire world that he loved more than anything else. His downfall can also be partially attributed to pride. He was essentially blinded by self-pride. He believed too much of the stories and information given to him and did not take time to find if it was indeed true (Bradley 49). He was under the notion that he was always right. Despite his love, Desdemona attempts to convince him that she loved him and was faithful to him; he would hear none of it. He lived in a society where the men were always right. The downfall of Othello can therefore be partially attributed to this extreme level of self-pride. Instead of sitting down and solving things amicably with his wife, he chose to listen to the words of a treacherous servant and raised the sword against the only person in the world that he professed to love truly.

## **Works Cited**

Bradley, A . C. Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth. London: Macmillan and Co, 2000. Print.

Adams, Michael. William Shakespeare's Othello. Woodbury, N. Y: Barron's, 2003. Print