

The sinister soliloquy:
an indepth look at
"othello" 2:1:308-314
essay



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An indepth look at " Othello" Act 2. sc. 1. Lines 308-314 IAGO That Cassio Loves Her, I do well believe't.

That she loves him, ' tis apt and of great credit. The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not, Is of constant, loving, noble nature, And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too, Not out of absolute lust (though preadventure I stand accountant for as great a sin) But partly led to diet my revenge For that i do suspect the lusty Moor Hath leaped into my seat - the thought whereof Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards, And nothing canvor shall content my soul Till I am evened with him, wife for wife, Or, failing so, yet I put the Moor At least into jealousy so strong That judgement cannot cure. Which thing I do, If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trace For his quick hunting, stand the putting on, I'll have Michael Cassio on the hip, Abuse him to the Moor in the garb (For fear I fear Cassio with my too), Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me For making him egregiously an ass And for practicing upon his peace and quiet Even to madness. Tis here, but yet confused.

Knavery's plain face is never seen till used. He exits. John W. Dunphy Dr.

Basile Shakespeare the Later Works 9/22/08 One of the reasons this excerpt from Shakespeare's " Othello" stands above the rest is that within these lines, Shakespeare inadvertently, or perhaps not, draws the blueprint for the great archetypal schemers that can still be found in all forms of media and art today. The antagonists monologue declaring what they will do has even reached the point of cliché as evidenced in Disney's The Incredibles, when Frozone jokes, " He starts monologuing! He starts like, this prepared speech

about how *feeble* I am compared to him, how *inevitable* my defeat is, how *the world* *will soon* *be his*, yadda yadda yadda. " (imdb. com) In this passage, while Iago plots this course of destruction and scandal, he uses words very plainly and matter of factly. This clashes greatly with the usual color and imagery that Iago often uses when speaking to others, a fact that even Russ McDonald points out in his book, "The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare:" "It is Iago's talent for language and fiction - or lies- that permits him to realize those imagined circumstances.

.. An audience's moral revulsion at Iago's plot is overpowered, at least occasionally, by its admiration for his wicked creativity and his skillful use of words. " (57) Here, however, that use of flowery language is absent. If anything, this humanizes the character. As the play progresses, it becomes easy for the audience to think of Iago as almost omniscient, having preemptively planned everything that will happen and seeing the world progress exactly as he had predicted.

Within these lines, Iago is seen without grace or poise. His words are not intended to convince anyone of anything and so they reveal his true identity. An identity that lowers the shroud of prose and suggestion that Iago has cocooned himself within, and shows the creature that has spun the lies. It is that very lack of poetic rhetoric that exemplifies the text. While the audience/reader has become fascinated by Iago's verse, his simple statements such as "poor trash of Venice," and "Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me for making him egregiously an ass," (79, 81) reveal how he truly feels about the players. Simple mockeries that clash with future descriptions of Othello.

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Even his hatred of Othello becomes more raw since he is speaking to no one. Earlier, when talking to Roderigo he says quite plainly, " I am not what I am," (11) and " I have told thee often, and I retell thee again and again, I hate the Moor. " (53) However, knowing that Iago has a propensity for lies, his word can not ultimately be trusted when he has dialogue with anyone. During his soliloquy, when all other characters are absent, can his word be trusted.

Iago says it himself, " Knavery's plain face is never seen till used. " (81) Iago now shows his plain face to the audience. He is not the great mastermind that he shows to the world, he is simply a man who feels he has been wronged. Although he admits it in this passage, his " plain face" is not seen until " it is used," or he takes action. On page 253, when Iago is cornered by his wife in front of the Othello, he resorts to screaming, " Filth" and " Thou liest," and ultimately kills her. For even when he killed Roderigo, he could disguise the murder as a protecting Cassio, but to outright kill a woman creates a void in his character that destroys any illusion of grandeur that the audience has created around him.

What Shakespeare does here as well is give validity to McDonald's argument about assigning the tragic flaw. In Shakespeare's particular treatment of the mode, the poignancy of the action derives from the dramatic irony: it's the tragic figure's talent that leads to destruction. " (86) Othello's progency as a military commander has been stated throughout the text and indeed it is inherent that a man who fights constantly for territory would indeed make him prone to jealousy. A fact which Iago plans to exploit in this passage; " Or failing to do so, yet that I put the Moor at least into a jealousy so strong that judgement cannot cure.

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" (79)Something that sticks out about the sentence structure within this text is the sheer length of the sentences. Indeed, most of the text lies in two sentences, one ten lines long and one twelve. The sentences show a descent into what could conceivably be considered madness. Lines 313 to 324 are the keys that lay out his plan. Iago will enrage Othello and create in him " A jealousy so strong that judgement can not cure. " (79) It's almost as if this plot has been resting in his subconscious for some time and he is only now realizing that he is in a position to make his ideas manifest.

What is interesting is that herein do we see another side of Iago's hatred for Othello. Commonly, it is thought that the main reason for Iago's feelings for Othello is the fact that he was looked over for the position of Captain which was given to Michael Cassio, and that he must now submit to merely being Othello's " Ancient," but here he see that there is another level to Iago's enmity. In reference to Emilia, he says that he " suspects the lusty Moor hath leaped into my seat. " (79) He goes on to say that thought of them being together gnaws at his inwards like a " poisonous mineral. Ironically enough, here he reveals his own jealousy. A jealousy which eventually lands him imprisoned.

His own plot to use jealousy turns on him. This not only gives the reader a fair idea of how he is feeling, but it also alludes to the future. For not only are his insides churning to fight against a " poison," but the " mineral" is also eroding his mind. Slowly, over the course of the play, we see Iago get more brazen and more haphazardous in his ploys, like a juggler who begins throwing more balls than he can safely control.

First, he plants the seed of doubt in Othello's mind. Next, encourages Cassio to appeal to Desdemona. Then he manipulating Desdemona to appeal to Othello on behalf of Cassio. At a certain point he convinces his wife, Desdemona's trusted hand maiden, to steal from her mistress.

He also kills Roderigo and throughout must make himself seem worthy to everyone and all of this within the span of a day or two. By the time he kills his wife in act five, it is safe to assume that he has given in completely to whatever it was that created his initial unease. When Iago says, " For his [Othello's] quick hunting, stand the putting on,/ I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,/ Abuse him to the Moor in the garb/ (For I fear Cassio with my too)" (79) Iago means to make Cassio the weapon by which he leads Othello to his defeat. Interestingly enough though, he does treat Cassio like a weapon, not trusting him completely and knowing that the business end of a sword can easily be pointed back towards him, for in the next two lines, he mentions that he will only put Cassio down in front of Othello for he fears " Cassio with his . This could be due to rational paranoia at what he is about to do, or it could have greater indications that Iago is starting to treat everyone as if they will end up destroying him.

Within this passage, Iago is seen in a plain light, without grandeur and without any preconceived ambition. Throughout the entire play, he wears masks all about him. To Roderigo, he plays the victim turned aggressor who was wronged and shall not defiantly bring about an end to corruption. To Othello, he is the advisor and friend that brings him truth. The dominant, yet at times sympathetic, husband to Emilia, the encouraging advisor to Cassio, even the confidant to Desdemona, all are falsehoods.

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It is only here that Iago makes himself known for the true desperate man that he is. Works Cited Shakespeare, William. "Othello." edited by Mowat, Barbara A.

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