

The tragedy of othello research paper

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William Shakespeare's work titled *The tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, is thought to have been based on an Italian short story *Un Capitano Moro* (Jones 2). *Un Capitano Moro*, means ' a Moorish captain'. The tragedy of *Othello* has four main characters. They include Othello, who is the lead actor; Desdemona, Othello's wife; Cassio, Othello's lieutenant; and Iago a junior officer in the army (Jones 2).

Shakespeare depicts Othello as a Moorish general in the Venetian army, with immense power. Shakespeare's work, *The tragedy of Othello*, has four main themes: racism, love, jealousy, and betrayal (Jones 2). This paper endeavors to discuss what makes Othello a tragic figure and whether or not his tragedy is self inflicted or it is beyond his control.

William Shakespeare's introduces the audience to his literal work by highlighting a confrontation between Roderigo, who is depicted as a wealthy and corrupt gentleman, and Iago. Apparently, Roderigo questions Iago as to why he had not informed him about the secret marriage between Othello and Desdemona.

Roderigo had initially requested Senator Brabantio, Desdemona's father for permission to marry his daughter. As such, Roderigo feels unhappy with the turnaround of events and he finds it hard to accept the fact that he had lost Desdemona to Othello. During the confrontation, it is evident that Iago is unhappy with the action taken by Othello to promote Cassio to a higher rank. In addition, Iago paints a picture that Othello had gone to bed with his wife, Emilia.

Iago vows to fight back and his aim is to impair Othello's power. Since Iago and Roderigo had one common enemy, Othello, they decided to work together with the main goal of punishing their enemy. Thus, Iago convinces Roderigo to inform Desdemona's father about Desdemona's secret marriage to Othello. Iago secretly plans a confrontation between Othello and Senator Brabantio. He informs Othello that his father in law is on the way.

However, before Senator Brabantio had arrived, Othello is summoned by the senate to plan on how to counter an alleged attack from their neighbors, the Turks. Upon his arrival, "Desdemona's father accuses his son in law before the senate of using witchcraft to seduce his daughter" (Nabil 5).

However, Othello disagrees with his father in law's accusations and states that Desdemona loves him. The senate believes Othello's side of the story and he is excused to focus on the impending war. Senator Brabantio exits but warns Othello that Desdemona will betray him. Othello is ordered by his superior Duke to go and command the Venetian army against the Turks. Othello goes along with his wife, Cassio, Iago, and Emilia.

Upon their arrival at the battleground, they find that their enemies had been destroyed by a heavy storm. Othello, as the commander of the Venetian army calls for a general celebration. The party gives Iago a chance to scheme his vengeance against Othello and Cassio. Iago intends to spoil the relationship between Othello and Cassio, so he uses Roderigo to achieve his mission. Iago ensures that Cassio has taken excess wine and becomes drunk. This makes it easy for Roderigo to engage Cassio in a fight.

A disturbance erupts following the fight between Cassio and Roderigo, and Othello is forced to calm the situation. Othello is unhappy with Cassio and demotes him. This action demoralizes Cassio. Iago finds another chance to inflict his revenge on Cassio and Othello. Iago asks Cassio to request Desdemona to be the mediator between him and Othello so that she can talk to her husband and ask Othello to reinstate him.

Iago cements his scheme by informing Othello to be weary of a growing relationship between Desdemona and Cassio. Cassio finds a prostitute called Bianca to sooth him following the stress he had after being demoted.

Desdemona accidentally drops a handkerchief, which Othello had given her as a symbol of their love. Emilia takes the handkerchief and is aware of its significance. Iago requests Emilia to give him the handkerchief. Iago uses it to paint a picture that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair.

He then secretly places the handkerchief in Cassio's bedroom. Iago then informs Othello about this incident. He requests Othello to stand at a distance as he questions Cassio about the handkerchief. During their discussion, Cassio speaks about the name of Bianca so quietly that Othello believes he is truly having an affair with Desdemona.

However, Iago's scheme almost suffers a setback. As he discusses the handkerchief issue with Cassio, Bianca arrives and accuses Cassio for allegedly cheating on her with Desdemona. Othello realizes this development and gives his wife's infidelity allegations a second thought. However, Iago successfully manages to convince him that Desdemona is cheating on him with Cassio.

Othello vows to kill Desdemona. He also asks Iago to get rid of Cassio. Out of anger, Othello mistreats his wife and even hits her before her family. Roderigo gives up on his pursuit of Desdemona but Iago encourages him to continue with his aim. At the same time, Cassio is appointed the governor of Cyprus. Iago uses this development to ask Roderigo to go on with his pursuit (Nabil 5).

Iago asks Roderigo to kill Cassio. Iago informs Roderigo that he should continue pursuing Desdemona because Othello and Desdemona are likely to leave the country if Cassio assumes office thus limiting his chances of getting Desdemona. Roderigo sees the sense and continues with his pursuit.

Roderigo attacks Cassio as he leaves Bianca's house. Iago takes the opportunity during the fight between Cassio and Roderigo to cut Cassio's leg from behind. Iago disguises himself such that no one notices him. Iago then joins passers by who had come to rescue Cassio. However, Cassio recognizes Roderigo as one of those who had assaulted him. On realizing this, Iago secretly gets rid of Roderigo in fear of the fact that Roderigo might confess.

During the same night, Othello kills his wife and Emilia arrives in time and witnesses the act (Nabil 5). Othello tries to make Emilia see the reasons as to why he had killed Desdemona. However, Emilia screams for help. This draws the attention of the governor, Iago and Cassio. Emilia explains to the astonished audience about Othello's heinous act. Othello tries to justify his act by revealing the incident of the handkerchief.

After Othello's testimony, Emilia realizes that Iago had used the handkerchief to scheme the allegation that Cassio and Desdemona had an affair. Emilia reveals to the others what Iago had done. Unfortunately, Iago kills her for exposing him. At the same time, Othello is left devastated because he realizes that his wife was innocent.

Out of anger, he attacks Iago but he decided not to kill him so that Iago would live with guilt. Iago states that he would not reveal his motives. Both Iago and Othello are apprehended. However, Othello commits suicide by stabbing himself with a sword on their way to the custody. Iago is taken to custody and at the same time Cassio takes his position as the governor of Cyprus.

Having looked at the plot *The Tragedy of Othello*, it is evident that Othello's tragedy is not self-inflicted and it was not within his control. In addition, it was as a result of his tragic flaw. Othello appears strong from the outside but actually he is weak inside. His love for Desdemona is the biggest weakness and his enemies take advantage of this weakness. Othello loved his wife so dearly that he could not bear seeing her with another man.

Iago takes advantage of this situation to get back at Othello for having promoted his junior Cassio, and for allegedly sleeping with his wife, Emilia. Iago schemes traps in which Othello falls unknowingly. Experts argue that Iago is blind and people who are in love are likely to make irrational decisions. This is often true in cases whereby a lover is weak inside. Othello is a perfect example. Iago made Othello believe that his wife, Desdemona was having an affair with his assistant, Cassio.

The mistake that Othello did was he failed to investigate those allegations. He relied heavily on hearsay from Iago. Othello's tragic ending can also be attributed to his tragic flaw. He made the mistake of believing in Iago rather than his soul mate. Othello fell in Iago's trap on two critical occasions (Young 4). In the first occasion, Othello was made to believe that it was Cassio who started the fight at the party. This incident formed a fertile ground for the execution of Iago's schemes.

It also makes Othello and Cassio lock horns. Othello was unhappy with Cassio and he demoted him. This action demoralizes Cassio. Iago finds another chance to inflict his revenge on Cassio and Othello (Young 4). This gave Iago a perfect opportunity to execute his second plan. In the second incident, Othello was made to believe that Cassio had an affair with his wife, Desdemona.

Iago successfully used a handkerchief gift which Othello had given to Desdemona to propagate his scheme. Othello had the opportunity to find the opportunity to uncover the truth when he overheard Bianca confronting Cassio. Again, Othello fell in Iago's trap when Iago successfully made him believe that his wife, Desdemona was cheating on him with Cassio.

This paper sought to find out whether or not Othello's tragedy is self-inflicted or it was beyond his control. Having examined the plot of the story, it is evident that Othello's tragedy is not self-inflicted and it was not within his control. On top of that, it was as a result of his tragic flaw. Othello appears strong from the outside but actually he is weak inside.

His love for Desdemona is the biggest weakness and his enemies take advantage of this weakness. He relied heavily on hearsay from Iago. Othello cultivated his tragic flaw on two critical occasions: Othello was made to believe that it was Cassio who started the fight at the party; Othello was made to believe that Cassio had an affair with his wife, Desdemona.

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