

# Use of animal imagery

Literature, Russian Literature



In "Othello" by Shakespeare, animal imagery is used throughout the play to make scenes more dramatic. This tool is commonly applied in numerous amounts of his plays, and many of today's authors still use it. Animal imagery can make the play easier to comprehend, and can show how the characters, mainly Iago, think.

It distinguishes the characters, and also shows variation between them. To be called an animal in a derogatory way had a lot of negative meaning to it, especially because "The Great Chain of Being" had a big impact on the Elizabethan lifestyle. Iago does everything in his power to try to destroy Othello's life for his own satisfaction, even though Othello didn't do anything to deserve it. In Shakespeare's play, Othello, animal imagery is a powerful tool used to further amplify the vulgar mindset on Othello's relationship with his wife, Desdemona.

The commencement of the whole animal imagery pattern started at the moment when Othello and Desdemona's marriage was introduced. Iago is trying to prove to Desdemona's father that she is no longer pure by representing them as animals. "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe." (I. I, lines 90-91) Othello and Desdemona have two very distinct differences - race and age. By including this comparison, it reveals two crucial variations between the two characters, with Othello being black and old, and Desdemona being youthful and white. By putting a concoction of rough, bestial images in Brabantio's mind, Iago is trying to get him to turn on Othello. This is because interracial marriage wasn't viewed as normal, and Desdemona is also younger than Othello. He wants to make Othello appear much worse than he actually is. By being called a ram,

Othello is apparently worth a lot less than human, because according to “The Great Chain of Being”, animals are far less than royalty or humans.

Although Iago is the person that uses animal imagery the most, Othello starts to apply it to himself. Iago uses animal imagery to put a crude image in Othello’s mind to get him to believe that Desdemona is sleeping with Cassio. After some time of mentally torturing him, Othello begins to believe all the false statements about Desdemona sleeping with Cassio. After all self respect has been lost, Othello then says, “ I had rather be a toad... and live on the vapour of the dungeon than keep a corner in the thing I love for others’ uses.” (III. III, lines 286-289) Othello believes that since his wife is supposedly sleeping with Cassio, he is only worth as much as a toad is - very little. Othello is so mad and disappointed at Desdemona that he would rather be anything else than who he is right now. But little does he know that this whole scheme is all fake.

When Iago uses animal imagery, he tries to make everything sound a lot worse than it actually is. Many of the times he will use them in a crude way, and will use it to further emphasize what he is trying to say. If Iago describes things that are happening by using bestial images, it will make other characters even more mad, and that’s just what he wants. Since Othello is black and is married to a white, younger woman, he is pretty easy to make fun of. But Iago tries to ruin his life as much as he can, but the reason why he is doing all of this is because he thinks Othello slept with his wife. He has no proof, but Iago feels that Othello deserves whatever mental pain he has caused him. By comparing him to animals like black rams and barbary

horses, it shows that Iago can't simply just insult Othello, but has to show how similar his animalistic behaviors are.

The use of animal imagery can be a very helpful tool in Shakespeare's play, "Othello". It can help to understand the characters better, and it can also emphasize what some characters are saying. It can distinguish the characters and give of good variation of who the characters are. By including animal imagery in "Othello", it can help the reader understand what is being said because of how they perceive the animal being talked about. It is supposed to show how Othello is corrupting Desdemona, and make him seem like he does animalistic acts. Animals were seen as less than human in the "The Great Chain of Being", so to be called an animal in a derogatory way had a lot of negative meaning to it.