

Analysis of othello's soliloquy

Literature, Russian Literature



Soliloquies are an integral part to most William Shakespeare plays and one of the most important soliloquies was that of the tragic protagonist in the play, Othello. A soliloquy is speech often used to reveal thoughts or feelings that is delivered by a character in a play to him or herself, or directly to the audience. The tragic protagonist of the play is no one other than Othello, who the play is named after. Othello is the brave General of the Venetian army who by listening to the deceitful Iago becomes falsely jealous of his wife, Desdemona.

In this soliloquy or passage (Act 5, Scene 2, line 1-24), Othello is about to commit the murder of his beautiful wife, Desdemona on false premises.

Previous to Act 5, scene 2, Iago had convinced Othello that Desdemona had made him a cuckold. Othello is totally overcome with rage and love and is deciding to kill Desdemona. This scene is the climax of the play in which the end product of Iago's scheming is revealed.

In this scene, Othello is lying next to the sleeping Desdemona and is preparing to kill her. In this soliloquy, Othello reveals his decision to kill Desdemona even though he does not want to because he still loves her.

Othello is very emotional and still feels very strongly about Desdemona. This is first observed through repetition. In the beginning of his soliloquy, Othello says "It is the cause," (Act 5, scene 2, lines 1 and 3) and later repeats "put out the light," (Act 5, scene 2, lines 7 and 10) three times each. The repetition shows that Othello is trying to force himself to kill Desdemona because he really does not want. He repeats the words to justify his actions.

In addition, the repetition emphasizes Othello's emotions, which are very regretful of the action he is about to do.

Further on in the soliloquy, Othello repeats "one more," (Act 5, scene 2, lines 18, 19, and 21) three times, in reference to giving Desdemona a kiss. This repetition also emphasizes Othello's emotions in that he does not want to kill Desdemona, but feels it is for the best. Othello's conflicting feelings are shown when he says "So sweet was ne'er so fatal" (Act 5, scene 2, line 23). By referring to Desdemona as "sweet" and "fatal," two opposites, Othello shows his conflict over how he feels about her.

Although Othello still loves Desdemona, he shows his determination to kill her. The first item Othello compares Desdemona to is a light when he says "Put out the light, put out the light. / If I quench thee, thou flaming minister, / I can again thy former light restore / should I repent me" (Act 5, scene 2, lines 7-10). In comparing Desdemona to a light, Othello says that he will "put out the light," or "quench her," both actions of killing. On the other hand, since Desdemona is represented by light, and without light, life is dark, by killing Desdemona, Othello will darken his life. This shows that Othello needs Desdemona and therefore that he loves her.

Next Othello compares Desdemona to a rose in the quote, "When I have plucked the / rose, / I cannot give it vital growth again. / It needs must whither" (Act 5, scene 2, lines 13-16). When a rose is plucked, its life is taken away, which reflects Othello's intention of killing Desdemona. Othello realizes that if he kills Desdemona, this process is irreversible. In contrast to that, by comparing Desdemona to a rose, he shows his love for her because

a rose is a symbol of beauty and love. This comparison is an indication of Othello's love for Desdemona, but also his wish to kill her.

In this soliloquy, Othello is speaking to the sleeping Desdemona about what he intends to do with her. The soliloquy is filled with devices such as repetition, pairing of opposites, and metaphors, which add intensity to his basic intention. This scene is the one most filled with tension in the entire play because he loves her but feels he needs to kill her.