

Manipulation leads to self destruction in othello essay sample

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In Shakespeare's Othello, isolation is shown in all aspects of the play. The majority of the play takes place on the island of Cyprus. Protected by military fortifications as well as by the forces of nature, external forces seem to present little threat to the island. Although the island does seem to protect them from the outside, it also leaves the characters with nothing to do but prey upon one another. This theme certainly carries over to the play's tragic hero. One would think that being the most powerful general in the land and having the most beautiful woman in the land Othello would not have such a hard time staying on top. The problem is that there is only room for one at the top of the mountain.

The largest catalyst of Othello's isolation, Iago, the play's most paradoxical character, drives Othello to question everything he knows. Iago's weapon is his ability to drive the other characters into a personal conflict, which leads the characters to have both an outer and inner life. Even though Iago and Othello's duality is more clearly shown, most of the characters in the play display a personal inner conflict. Being a tragic hero, Othello falls victim to the loneliness and isolation that Iago drives him to. Almost all of the play's major character's become torn between themselves, and even Iago falls prey to his own obsession with revenge. The isolation also serves as a foreshadowing of the characters impending doom.

Iago's outer and inner self is what brings the other characters to isolation and duality. It has been said that Iago is the most honest character in the play. This may most certainly be true. His outward persona certainly suggests a contradiction that the audience is aware of. Every character in

the play feels as though Iago is an honest man. It is this public perception that allows him to do what he does. His own honesty is confirmed by Othello on multiple occasions. For example, "A man he is of honesty and trust." He also says, "My life upon her faith! Honest Iago." An important word to notice is the faith that Othello uses there.

The reader will come to see that faith is later shown to be the tragic flaw of Othello. What makes Iago so paradoxical is that he is honest about his dishonesty. "I am not what I am." He is in such good standing that he can say that he is deceitful and is not what he seems and the other characters don't see his games. It is Iago's outer persona that allows him to do the things that he does to all of the other characters. Very much like a parasite, Iago lives off of the other people. His way of life is through the manipulation and control over other people. Iago says, "I follow him to serve my turn upon him." He is a leech. He is using his rationality and good persuasion skills to gain from others loss. What Iago did not expect though, was that while he was driving all of the other characters into isolation, he was also isolating himself, which eventually led to his downfall.

Othello's duality is the most prolific in the play. Known as the "noble Moor," Othello is almost thrown into inner turmoil from the very beginning. Being a black man, among a white society, but having power over that society strikes a powerful contrast in the play. It is through this success that he gained so much pride that it becomes a weakness of his. Shakespeare may be saying here that he has no right to his pride because he is an outsider in this play. But Othello's most tragic flaw was his own willingness to trust other

people. Iago describes Othello: "That thinks men honest that but seem to be so." His inner self is telling him that he should believe Iago because of his abnormally large amount of pride. Earlier in the play Othello's use of the word faith most clearly shows his willingness to put himself out for other people to walk on. He has an inherent quality of being able to put his faith in people. It seems that Shakespeare is saying that his faith is his undoing. This inner faith hinders him in two ways. Because of his faith that Iago is honest he believes everything that he says.

On the other hand though, his faith is not shown with his own love and wife, Desdemona. He seems to also be a bad judge of character because he believes another over the woman he loves. Being a bad judge of character and having too much faith is the combination of traits that bring his downfall. It was clear at the start of the play that he was a prideful and powerful man and it was clear that he was also happy. Iago's role in his destruction was that of doubt. He placed the doubt into the mind of Othello. This doubt is what drove him to his polar personality. The contrast of his inner turmoil and his outer prideful appearance is what is so compelling about the play. The reader sees his pain and feels it with him, while the other characters, each dealing with their own split, still see him as a powerful man. The play seems to say that the other characters may look to Othello for some sort of peace or calmness, while ironically he is the most troubled of them all. Othello's outward appearances are what made him a hero. But it is his inner turmoil that makes him tragic.

Both Cassio and Desdemona's deaths are a result of the manipulations of Iago. A reader of the play would notice that it seems as though both of these characters are quite innocent in all this. Yes of course one could make the argument that all the characters, with the exception of Iago, were innocent but there is something different about these two. Cassio and Desdemona both were not out for any considerable personal gain. These two characters are victims in the truest sense. Desdemona is never even influenced by Iago directly. It is through Iago's dealings that people around her affect her. Both Desdemona and Cassio do display the dual nature, but their inner turmoil is less prolific.

The characters of Othello fall victim to first Iago, but then become victims of themselves. Iago is the master manipulator that leads to the destruction of every major character in the play, including himself. The inner struggle that Iago instills leads each character to doubt everything. This doubt leads the characters to display one thing while really feeling another. The most profound thing that this play says lies in its isolation theme. The island setting is the most subtle yet powerful idea in the play. The characters cannot be islands, meaning that they cannot cut themselves off. This play seems to say that the self isolation of each character so as to cause self preservation leads ultimately to self destruction.