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According to a study conducted by David Buss, it is known that jealousy is the number one cause of spousal murder in the United States. In Shakespeare's tragedy, Othello, both romantic and professional jealousy are at play. Othello falls prey to romantic jealousy when Iago convinces him, through a series of deceptive schemes, that Desdemona has been unfaithful. Ironically even though Iago uses jealousy as a tool against Othello, it is also the motivation for his own actions. Iago becomes professionally jealous because Othello promoted Cassio to lieutenant over him. He is also jealous of Othello's loving marriage to Desdemona because he believes Othello has slept with his wife. Shakespeare's Othello presents a world dominated by jealousy which leads to the characters' destructive need for revenge fueled by not only the fear of losing something that is theirs but a desire to possess what belongs to others. The world in Othello is an example of how jealousy can be ignited and fanned by mere circumstantial evidence and rumor.

Iago, the character behind all the destruction in the play uses the other characters' insecurities to fuel their jealousy. However, he himself suffers from extreme jealousy as is displayed when he proclaims, " I hate the Moor,/And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets/He's done my office. I know not if 't be true,/But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,/Will do as if for surety." (Othello. 1. 3.

377-81) Iago admits that he despises Othello because there is a rumor that "twixt my sheets" Othello has slept with his wife, Emilia. In this quote, he admits he doesn't know if the rumors are true calling them " mere suspicion", although he points out it doesn't matter if they are true because

all he needs is suspicion to be able to seek vengeance. Iago acting on mere suspicion reveals how jealousy can cumulate to blur perception and reason.

When Iago starts feeling jealous he begins to tell himself a story that Othello betrayed him by giving lieutenantcy to Cassio, and that Othello has been sleeping with his wife. Because Iago is telling himself these stories he is trying to find a justification for his actions. The novel describes how jealousy trains us to look with intensity but not accuracy.

This is apparent as Othello is tricked into believing that Desdemona is unfaithful from mere circumstantial evidence. When Iago first brings up the possibility of Desdemona being unfaithful, Othello responds defensively: “Think’st thou I’d make a life of jealousy,/’Tis not to make me jealous/To say my wife is fair. No, Iago,/ I’ll see before I doubt, when I doubt, prove,/And on the proof, there is no more.” (3. 3. 185-95) Othello characterizes himself as a person who does not get jealous easily, and will not act to outlandish ideas without proof.

In this moment Othello is thinking very rationally as he protects Desdemona’s and his honor. However, a little later in the play, he threatens Iago to find proof that she is unfaithful, yelling, “ Give me living reason she’s disloyal.”(3. 3. 410) Othello’s emotions overrun his rationality he goes from denial to actively seeking a proof of her unfaithfulness. This comes to show that the more jealous Othello becomes, the more he loses himself and lives in rage and fantasy. Iago feeds this fantasy through lies and false evidence.

As Iago gives Othello an opportunity to be suspicious, Othello’s standard of seeking truth erodes. Othello has become untethered and irrational,

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resulting in his delusional belief of Desdemona's infidelity. Othello's rapid descent from being an honorable man shows the monster-like nature of jealousy. While trying to convince Othello about Desdemona's adultery, Iago cautions Othello about the savageness of jealousy saying, " Oh, beware, my lord, of jealousy!/It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock/The meat it feeds on." (3. 3.

167-70) In the play Shakespeare uses the metaphor " green-eyed monster" to portraying jealousy as an uncontrollable beast. When Iago makes a reference to " the meat it feeds on," he is referring that jealousy feeds on doubt, love and the human soul. This shows how mysterious and pervasive jealousy is as it causes madness and insomnia.

It creates an inescapable trap which mocks its victims. In the play, Emilia also refers to jealousy as a monster. She states, " But jealous souls will not be answered so./They are not ever jealous for the cause, /But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster Begot upon itself, born on itself," (3. 4. 155-59). Like Iago, Emilia compares jealousy to a monster, claiming that jealousy does not have a reason, but grows and feeds on itself.

Emilia has a key perspective because she has seen what jealousy has done to her husband. Jealousy, compared to a hungry monster, is an emotion that needs to be fed. Jealousy is fed in Othello by merciless revenge. Once characters in Othello fall into jealousy, their immediate next move is a burning desire and need for revenge. Iago portrays this need throughout the entire play as he schemes his plans.

When he is plotting his initial revenge he says: And nothing can or shall content my soul Till I am evened with him, wife for wife. Or, failing so, yet that I put the Moor At least into a jealousy so strong I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip (2. 1.

290-300). Iago privately recounts his need and methods of revenge. He expresses his desire for revenge as it is the only thing that will “content” his “soul”. These lines offer a powerful description of jealousy and its destructive, torturous effects on both those who feel jealous and the victims of their revenge.

By carrying out these actions, Iago is feeding the monster of jealousy. However, in his revenge, Iago goes past getting even... “Wife for Wife”. In the end, he overcompensates and does everything in his power to destroy those who he feels have wronged him. For example, he not only wants Cassio to lose his job but wants him “at the hip,” meaning he wants complete power and control over him. Like Iago, once overtaken by jealousy, Othello has a necessity for revenge over both Cassio and Desdemona: Ay, let her rot, and perish and be damned tonight, for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone.

I strike it, and it hurts my hand.” (4. 1. 200-04) The love that Othello once had for Desdemona is turned into hatred by jealousy and Iago’s trickery. Filled with insecurity, arrogance and the fear of Desdemona’s betrayal, Othello talks himself into his right to vengeance. However, Othello also goes beyond an eye for an eye, as his vengeance is killing her so she will go to hell.

Jealousy requires an overcompensatory retaliation. As Dr. Geoff Scobie, a psychologist at the University of Glasgow, has explained: “ If retribution is about an eye for an eye, revenge is , when you take some form of action and you tend to extract more than you experienced yourself” This is apparent in both Iago’s and Othello’s revenge, as they go beyond “ an eye for an eye”.

In the end, both the hero and anti-hero kill their wives to fulfill their revenge and soothe their jealous souls, no matter how, they are punished for their merciless actions. At the end of the play Othello kills himself once he finds out Iago tricked him and Iago will be tortured and either killed or jailed. This play showcases how jealousy can drive people to complete insanity and has the power to reveal a person’s aggression, and hideous ambition. Which when are set free without moral compass only leads to utter destruction. In the end, the revenge sought ends up hurting the aggressor just like it ends up hurting the victim.

Jealousy is fueled by insecurity, therefore is such a strong acting force because human beings will do anything in their power to protect what they feel has the most value or that they feel most self conscious about.