

# Marital destruction out of dysfunctional marriage and othello's characters



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Course: College English 2 Date: 12/4/12 Marital destruction out of dysfunctional marriage and Othello's characters William Shakespeare is(1564-1616) widely regarded as the greatest writer in the history of English literature and the most pre-eminent dramatist around the world. Among all his works, many literary critics regard Othello as the peak of his tragedies. Othello is not only a tragedy of family, but also a tragedy of love. Jealous psychology of the characters ultimately leads to the marital tragedy. Iago was jealous of Cassio and Othello, so he slandered and entrapped Cassio and Desdemona, which directly brought about the tragedy.

Othello's true love to Desdemona was utilized by Iago who had an ulterior motive. Driven by jealousy, Othello readily believed Iago, and personally killed his own wife, and eventually drew his sword to cut his own throat. Therefore, the tragedy in Othello's marriage is largely rooted in jealous psychology. We analyze the reason effect this tragedy of marriage by following the premarital objective situation and the subjective married life. Othello and Desdemona's marriage is doomed and dysfunctional from the beginning because of acute differences in marriage and due to Othello's flaw of characters.

We analyze the reasons which affect this tragedy of marriage by following the premarital situation then Othello's characters in married life. To pave the way for detailed analysis, it is necessary to know about two types of marriages at that time. Jessica Tvordi says in "In quarter and in Terms like Bride and Groom": Reconfiguring Marriage, Friendship, and Alliance in Othello " In its treatment of marriage, Othello introduces and creates tensions between two models of marriage: the dynastic or lineal marriage

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and the “companionate” or affective marriage. The traditional discourse of dynastic marriage reflects large concerns regarding the necessity of marriage which means “long term objectives of linear family” which is defined by Lisa Jardine. Jessica Tvordi says “...the discourse of affective marriage emphasizes the importance of companionship in marriage rather than political and economic gains”. About play Othello, Othello is a Moorish general of Venice. Othello is described by Iago as “Barbary horse” (105 line, Scene 1, Act 1). However, Desdemona is a beautiful girl who is the daughter of Venetian senator Brabantio.

Brabantio is a traditional noble person, his mind obeys and follows the dynastic marriage rule. As Desdemona’s father, dependent on the different races and different status, Brabantio certainly fights against with the marriage between Othello and his daughter. In other words, Othello lacks the “required conveniences” for Brabantio’s family which is pointed out by Iago. Moreover, similar like the two types of marriages affective marriage and the dynastic marriage are not only occurred in England, but also happened in other country.

For example, when people marry in China, they follow “be matched for marriage”. Because in Chinese culture, marriage is not only two people’s combination but also two families’ unite. So “match” means two families’ economic conditions, social status, and members of family should be equivalent. Apparently, Othello and Desdemona have a big gap in economic conditions and social status. Here, we can find out that Othello and Desdemona’s marriage doomed from the start, at least, their marriage is not benedictory.

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However, Desdemona and Othello are against the dynastic marriage rule, they start a clandestine marriage which seemed as a misalliance. Iago reveals their marriage to Brabantio, emphasizing the nature of Desdemona's actions as disruptive of lineal conventions. Seemingly, Desdemona and Othello aspire a kind of affective marriage which is presented by Jessica Tvordi "a more equal partnership between husband and wife". In fact, "Desdemona and Othello represent their feelings for one another within the Protestant paradigm of companionship and affection, which at its most elevated usually downplays strictly lineal concerns. As point out by Jessica Tvordi. When Othello is asked about the match, he explains that Desdemona loves him because of Desdemona's admiration and pity, she thank'd me, And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her, I should but teach him how to tell my story. And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake: She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd, And I loved her that she did pity them. This only is the witchcraft I have used(3. 3. 90) Desdemona also confirms her promise and says: My noble father, I do perceive here a divided duty: To you I am bound for life and education; My life and education both do learn me How to respect you; you are the lord of duty; I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband, And so much duty as my mother show'd To you, preferring you before her father, So much I challenge that I may profess Due to the Moor my lord. "(180 line, Scene 3, Act 3) Desdemona and Othello's representation certify that they will have an affective marriage and the love between them is true love.

Although their premarital condition is not being unpromising, they believe that this affective marriage carrying their true love will have a happy ending.

But at the end of the play, this kind of affective marriage change into a tragedy. The reason result in tragedy is Othello's character emerges in the married life. In Othello's character, he has a fatal weakness which is jealousy. On the battlefield, Othello is an all-power hero. However, he is made use of by Iago, giving rise to the credulity tragedy of murder his wife and suicide.

The tragic results are not only coming from treacherous Iago who is full of jealousy and great ambition but also comes from Othello's jealousy. Moreover, the jealousy consists of inferiority complex and being credulous. First, Othello always has an inferiority complex because of his black race. His fragile mind has never disappeared although he has been promoted as a noble general. When he hears from Iago about his wife has love affairs with Cassio, he said, " Haply, for I am black And have not those soft parts of conversation That chamberers have, or for I am declined Into the vale of years,—yet that's not much—She's gone.

I am abused; and my relief Must be to loathe her. " (line262 Scene 3, Act 3)

If he is not inferior, he would not judge and suspect his wife based on several pieces of provocation. He is inferior in color and age. In practice, he feels that he is not worthy of Desdemona. He feels inferior to Cassio so that he had an indefinable fear. Second, Othello is too credulous of Iago. He cannot imagine Iago is such an evil who envies Desdemona's beauty and is very angry and hates him due to a promotion.

Therefore, to achieve his revenge, Iago deliberately spread rumors, which Othello did not perceive. I do beseech you—Though I perchance am vicious

in my guess, As, I confess, it is my nature's plague To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy Shapes faults that are not—that your wisdom yet, From one that so imperfectly conceits, Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble Out of his scattering and unsure observance. It were not for your quiet nor your good, Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom, To let you know my thoughts. 145 line, Scene 3, Act 3) On the contrary, Othello thought Iago is an honest man since Iago behaved in a hesitant way to expose the truth to him, seems like a righteous man from the heart. In addition, Othello has another character which is male chauvinism. When he is provoked by Iago, he begins to doubt his honesty of Desdemona. It is rather his male chauvinism than so much trust in Iago. In his view, Desdemona's derailment is shameful, heinous, hurting his big man's self-esteem. Even if it is only a rumor, he also cannot wait to ask to find evidence.

I'll see before I doubt, when I doubt, prove, And on the proof there is no more but this: Away at once with love or jealousy! (195 line, Scene 3, Act 3) When he finds that his handkerchief which is used as engagement pledge in Cassio's room and suspected his wife's infidelity, it is understandable and justifiable based on his male chauvinism. Another drawback of Othello's character is his violent personality and impulsiveness, which finally causes the tragedy. Othello looks like a tamed lion after marriage. However he still has the lion's nature. When he is stimulated, he would fly into a rage.

In "Marriage, the Violent Traverse from Two to One in the Taming of the Shrew and Othello", the author Unhae Langis says "The seeds of disaster are sown in the characters of Othello and Desdemona themselves: as

Heraclitus once noted, "Man's character is his fate [daimon]." Unhae Langis <https://assignbuster.com/marital-destruction-out-of-dysfunctional-marriage-and-othellos-characters/>

analysis the relationship between Othello and Desdemona based on the Othello's character like that: " Othello inexorably enacting upon Desdemona the disaster of his marital state and the violent liberalization of the male headship in the smothering of his wife.

Ironically, it is their very passion for virtue that induces their ruin. Contrary to the common focus of criticism, it is sameness rather difference that brings on the debacle. " Just like Unhae Langis says, Othello's violent personality makes his marriage tend to tragedy. Consequently, we can say Othello's violent personality and impulsiveness is the reason leading to the destruction. We believe it is a true love between Desdemona and Othello. But the result of their marriage is a tragedy. The tragedy is rooted in the objective marriage model and the subjective Othello's character.

At that time, dynastic marriage is the common marriage model. Affective marriage which Othello and Desdemona follow is not receptive at that time. Apparently, their races, social status and family condition are not match. Therefore, Othello and Desdemona's marriage doomed from the start because of their differences. Furthermore, by Othello's characters, which are violent personality, jealousy and male chauvinism, although they start this heavy marriage based on their true love, they cannot keep this marriage for a long time. Finally, their marriage is destroyed by Othello's character and social environment.

Shen, Good effort in the first draft! The thesis is clear and you have followed good research to show that the Othello-Desdemona marriage was doomed from the beginning. The biggest drawback in this paper was the use of

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research—you have too many quotes, without explaining what they mean and how they are being used in the specific paragraph or context of your argument. You also need to focus on MLA citations in the second draft. The paper requires 4 sources and so far you have two critics cited. The Works Cited page also should be formatted correctly. Good effort overall!

Citation 1. Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Literature Reading Fiction, Poetry, and Drama. Ed. Robert, Diyanni. New York: McGraw Hill 2007. Print 2. Langis, Unhae. " Journal of the Wooden O Symposium. " Marriage, the Violent Traverse from Two to One in the Taming of the Sbrew and Othello 8 (2008): 45-63. Academic Search Complete. Web. 4 Dec. 2012. 3. Jessica, Tvordi. " Journal of the Wooden O Symposium. " In Quarter and in Terms like Bride and Groom": Reconfiguring Marriage, Friendship, and Alliance in Othello 8 (2008): 85-101. Academic Search Complete. Web. 4 Dec. 2012.