

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A. SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Othello, a Moorish nobleman and general in the Venetian army, has promoted the Florentine, Michael Cassio, as his lieutenant instead of a more experienced soldier, Iago. Iago, a Venetian, serves as his ancient. Iago, resentful and angry, plans to revenge against Othello and Cassio.

Othello is secretly married to Desdemona, the daughter of a wealthy senator, Brabantio. In his first plot against Othello, Iago conspires with Roderigo, a foolish young Venetian and one of Desdemona's rejected suitor. They arouse Desdemona's father at night with a report that his daughter has eloped with the Moor. Successful in his plan, Iago leaves Roderigo to avoid suspicion, whereas Roderigo accompanies Brabantio to meet Othello. Brabantio, furious against Othello, thinks the latter has used his magic to win his daughter. Unfortunately, when they meet, Othello is called by the Duke of Venice. Othello learns after that, that he is ordered to go to Cyprus to protect the island against the Turks. Likewise, Othello has also convinced the Duke that Desdemona is willingly married to him. On the other hand, Desdemona, does not only confess that she loves Othello, but she also begs the Duke to allow her to go with her husband to Cyprus. As such Othello commands Iago to take

care of Desdemona and to bring Iago's wife, Emilia, to accompany Desdemona there. Because of his belief in Iago's honesty, Othello leaves Desdemona in Iago's care. Iago then persuades Roderigo, who has become pessimistic, not to give up so easily in his desire to get Desdemona. With Roderigo's help, Iago has more chances to win Cassio's position and to carry out his revenge against Othello.

A storm has destroyed the enemy's fleet when they, except Othello, arrive in Cyprus. This makes Desdemona worried. When she arrives, Cassio's friendly greeting of her gives Iago an idea of infidelity. Likewise, Iago plans to make Othello believe that Desdemona has been unfaithful with the lieutenant and that they are lovers. Iago succeeds in getting Cassio's place by making the latter drunk on Othello and Desdemona's wedding. Thus, Othello dismisses Cassio. Then Iago suggests Cassio to beg Desdemona's help in pleading for his reinstatement to Othello.

Othello comes to Desdemona and finds Cassio is talking with Desdemona. This incident causes Othello to suspect Cassio. Furthermore, Iago tells Othello that Desdemona's plea for Cassio's reinstatement shows that she loves Cassio. As a result, Othello loses his confidence on Desdemona and therefore, he demands the proofs of Desdemona's guilts from Iago.

Desdemona's handkerchief is given to Iago by his wife whom finds it fall accidentally. Iago then secretly leaves

it in Cassio's room with a hope that Cassio will find it. Cassio finds it, but he does not know the owner. Since he is interested in the embroidery of the handkerchief, he hands it to his mistress Bianca to copy it. Meanwhile, Iago confirms to Othello that he has heard Cassio talking in his sleep and this suggests that Cassio is making love with Desdemona. Iago also tells Othello that he has seen Cassio with an handkerchief which seems to be Desdemona's. To strengthen his proofs, Iago prepares a meeting with Cassio and hides Othello nearby to hear the conversation between them. Unfortunately, Othello misunderstands about Cassio's confession because the latter talks about Bianca. Othello, however, misinterprets it and thinks that Cassio is speaking about Desdemona. These proofs are enough for Othello to convince him of his wife's infidelity. Even Desdemona cannot produce the handkerchief which Othello asks for. He swears to revenge against his wife and Cassio. Lodovico arrives with a letter from the Duke which recalls Othello to Venice and appoints Cassio to replace him in Cyprus. This confounds Othello's problem, but advantageous for Iago's plot. Othello strikes and orders Desdemona out of his sight and refuses to believe Emilia's words that Desdemona is faithful to him. Othello, however, agrees with Iago's suggestion not to poison Desdemona. Instead he should smother her in bed. Moreover, Iago offers to kill Cassio. Iago succeeds in asking Roderigo to do the murder instead of him. He promises that Roderigo will get Desdemona afterwards.

In the dark, Roderigo attacks Cassio but the latter is saved by his mailshirt. The arrival of Lodovico also saves him from being killed by Iago. Being fearful of betrayal, Iago stabs Roderigo. Overhearing Roderigo's cry which he believes to be Cassio's, Othello prepares to smother his wife. After ordering Desdemona to pray for her sin, Othello then kills her. Emilia enters with a report of Roderigo's death and she is surprised to find that Desdemona is dying. Knowing the reason of this murder, Emilia reveals the truth. This confession leads to her death since Iago kills her in order to stop her mouth against him. Iago's treachery cannot be concealed any longer because Lodovico also finds letters in Roderigo's pockets which show the evidences of Iago's guilts. Othello then wounds Iago, but the former fails to kill him. Othello finally kills himself because of his great grief. He dies with a kiss on the cold lips of his innocent wife.

B. BACKGROUND OF OTHELLO

The play begins in Venice with a particular society in which Othello is an outsider. Venice suggests that they like to generate intrigue and to hide their feelings towards others. In other words, they are pretenders. Their attitudes and appearances are artificial. The outsider, on the other hand, has a simple thought because he demands that men and women

should be what they appear. The beautiful should be good, the deformed should be corrupted, and the black-skinned should be black-hearted too. Thus, Othello does not either know or is suspicious of the customs which have conditioned his wife. The Venetians themselves regard Othello as an interloper - that is a man who does not belong to their society and has been called only in doing a certain job. For this reason, Othello has some reasons to feel insecure.

His color and his outlook motivate him in this alien Venice. His color, however, is the main problem for him because it makes him different from the Venetians. The marriage between him and Desdemona, therefore, is uncommon because he is black and he is uneasily conscious of the racial mixture. Likewise, the Moorish's attitude is quite different from the Venetian's. According to Shakespeare, if he exaggerates Othello's value in the latter's natural surroundings, it is unnecessary for Othello to be so intense about the infidelity of his wife. If this unfaithfulness really occurs, the solution is easy. Even this will not injure the husband's position either in his social contacts or in his public career. The erring wife, on the other hand, must take the responsibility by returning the bride-money if demanded. Othello in this play however, cannot raise his value in his foreign environment. His wife's infidelity makes him fearful to lose his honor because this can destroy his social contacts and ruin his public career. His fault is

that he never thinks he is married to a white woman while he himself is black and that the possibility of being unfaithful is bigger because of the color prejudice. This kind of prejudice, thereby, can intensify his plight. In this play, Othello himself does not refer to his color. It is Iago who begins insinuating him of his unfitting marriage and who suggests the possibility of being a cuckold of his white wife.

C. SOURCES OF THE PLAY

Shakespeare's main source for "OTHELLO" is "IL MORO DE VENEZIA", Italian stories collection written by Giraldi Cinthio. Their plots are different since Shakespeare adds some certain details and imaginations to give some important clues to his artistic purpose.

In Cinthio's story, all characters are nameless, except for Desdemona. He uses the Moor, the Ensign, and the Captain instead of Othello, Iago, and Cassio - the characters in Shakespeare's play. Cinthio conveys that Desdemona is married to the Moor although her parents oppose their marriage. There is no elopement of Desdemona and the Moor like in Shakespeare's play.

The Moor is characterised as a man who has a great personal courage. He has a high reputation among the nobility because of his lively intelligence and military ability. In their marriage, they live happily in Venice. Cinthio, moreover, reveals that the Ensign also falls in

love with Desdemona, but he believes that she is in love with the Captain. For this reason, he seeks for revenge against the Captain - his rival. Besides, the Ensign also vows to turn the Moor against Desdemona. The Ensign's motive is caused by his hatred of Desdemona who rejects to his advances. Therefore, his plot is also directed against her. In Shakespeare's play, Iago's motive is caused by his hatred towards Othello and he, therefore, plans to revenge against Othello.

In Cinthio's story, it is the Ensign's three-year-old daughter who steals Desdemona's handkerchief and gives it to her father to convince the Moor of Desdemona's guilt. When the Captain finds the handkerchief which he knows whose the owner is, he wants to return it. This visit is used by the Ensign to defeat his rival. Thus, the Moor overhears the conversation between the Ensign and the Captain which is arranged by the Ensign. The Ensign's gestures with his head and hands give an expression that he hears extraordinary things. Moreover, Desdemona is confronted with the loss of her handkerchief. Because of being confused, she lies to the Moor. Because of this event, Desdemona has a second thought about marriage which is unlike Shakespeare's idea of a heroine.

Bianca is used in Shakespeare's play as a woman to whom Cassio asks to copy the embroidery of Desdemona's handkerchief. In Cinthio's story, the Captain's woman is at home and there is no Bianca. Shakespeare also adds Roderigo as a tool for Iago's revenge while in Cinthio's

story, the Ensign does all his plots alone. He plans to kill the Captain and Desdemona and makes the murder seem like an accident. The Ensign, however, fails to kill the Captain but he succeeds in killing Desdemona. The death of his wife makes the Moor realize of his great love to her so that he rejects the Ensign. Because of this rejection, the Ensign plans to revenge against the Moor. Cinthio ends his story by the death of the Moor in the hands of Desdemona's relatives. The Ensign is prisoned for his whole life. After the Ensign's death, his wife reveals the truth.

D. PURPOSE OF WRITING THIS THESIS

Since the Elizabethan period up to now, William Shakespeare is still considered as one of the greatest dramatists. Although he did not study in a University, yet his plays are entertaining and instructive. They reflect human life and behaviour. Moreover, his plays are identifiable since the actors have the same problems as the audience. All these things make me interested in discussing one of his plays, that is "OTHELLO".

The first part is a discussion about Iago. Here the tactics used by Iago in his revenge against Othello and Cassio are emphasized. Iago is a very interesting character because of his intelligence which uses the people he hates to become his puppets without any suspicions from them. Besides, he is portrayed both as an

honest and villain character. For this reason, the writer is interested in discussing the theme of revenge in this play. The play does not only reveal Iago's vengeance against other characters, but it also shows Othello's revenge against his wife. This will become the writer's discussion in the second part. Othello's revenge is a result of Iago's scheme. The writer, however, will discuss Iago and Othello's revenge separately in order to see that their motives are different. The former is based on hatred and envy, while the other one is based on love and jealousy. Moreover, their motives and reasons for their revenge, the ways they used, and the consequences are woven in the discussion.