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**SUSPENSE ELEMENT IN OTHELLO  
B.A. THESIS**

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#### **PREFACE:**

I chose to prepare my thesis project on one of Shakespeare's plays because Shakespeare has not only instinctive understanding of humanity but he has also the power of expressing this understanding in such a way that his characters are more real to us than any person of history. They speak, think and act not only as Elizabethans but as human beings always have thought, spoken and acted. This requires a most sensitive and sympathetic power of observation. Shakespeare was fascinated by the infinite varieties of the human species.

Above all, Shakespeare's plays have durability. One can read and re-read them year after year, and at every reading they reveal new depths and understanding.

Finally, I would like to give my special thanks to all the lecturers of the English Department who did their best to educate us and especially to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gül Celkan, the chairperson of the English Department who has been very helpful to me in preparing this thesis as well.

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## INTRODUCTION:

Shakespeare's tragedy Othello is based on suspense and jealousy and it reflects us the typical scepticism of the Renaissance man. Othello, a black soldier working for Venice tries to make himself a part of the society that he works for.

With the Renaissance, the middle class begins to emerge besides the already existing aristocracy and the peasantry. Othello reflects the suffering of Othello who belongs to this middle-class and who searches his identity between these two classes. Moreover, we are presented in this play the ideals, corruptions, complexes, hierarchy and conflicts within the society.



## **PART I**

### **Some Approaches to Shakespeare Through Ages:**

Every generation approaches Shakespeare in a somewhat different way. His contemporaries first admired him as the author of sonnets and then as a writer of the first-rate plays for the stage. In the later half of the 17th century, he was esteemed rather as a genius who wrote irregular poetic dramas. The Romantic poets and the critics of the early 19th century, especially Coleridge, Lamb and De Quincey elevated him almost into the "Genius of the English Race". Critics of the Victorian Period admired his skill in creating character. In the first third of the 20th century, he was regarded as the greatest of all writers for the stage, while the mid-century critics have been more interested in his poetic techniques and ethical undertones.

In short, it is a sign of Shakespeare's perennial greatness that he can provide fresh literary experiences for such a diversity of readers and ages.

### Shakespeare's Tragedies:

In his Poetics, Aristotle defined tragedy as: "The imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, where with to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions".

There is little note between him and the writers of the Renaissance period. Chaucer, in the prologue to The Monk's Tale gives a representative Medieval view:

"Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,  
As olde bookes maken us memorie,  
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee  
And is yfallen out of heigh degree  
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly."

Shakespeare's greatest tragedies all show how the breaking of moral law leads inevitably to destruction. In Hamlet, Claudius' original sin of lust for Gertrude leads to the murder of Gertrude's husband, and ultimately to the deaths of Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes and Hamlet.

In Othello, Iago, for the basest motives, persuades Othello to a mad passion of jealousy against his wife Desdemona, which results in the deaths of Othello, Desdemona and incidentally of Roderigo and Emilia, Iago's wife. In King Lear, the old king's foolish pride leads him to discard his faithful daughter Cordelia, while the ruthless ambition of the bastard Edmund prompts him to betray his brother Edgar and then his father Gloucester. As a direct result of pride and ambition, Lear, Gloucester, Edmund, Cordelia and her two sisters Goneril and Regan all perish. In Macbeth, the ambition of Macbeth and his wife brings about the murder of Duncan and a whole series of disasters until Macbeth himself is killed in a battle.

To sum up; Shakespeare's tragedies reach down to the depths of emotion because his sense of moral law is as acute as his skill in portraying the pathos of human suffering...



### Othello and Ourselves:

Of all Shakespeare's tragedies, the appeal of Othello seems to be the simplest and most direct. The story is powerful and straightforward, the characters clearly defined and strongly contrasted, and the dramatic development rapid and full of excitement. Above all, the language of the play moves us by its sheer passion, grandeur and amplitude. To enter the world of Othello, we need less in the way of background knowledge than is the case with any of the other major tragedies. In some ways this is of course a great advantage, but it can be an obstacle too. There is a danger that because we can respond to the play so immediately and intimately, we shall assume that we need not pay patient attention to it in order fully to understand it. An even greater danger is that we shall easily and lazily assume that our response to Othello is necessarily that of Shakespeare's original audience.

The truth is that Othello is not a simple play, though, like all Shakespeare's plays, a part of its appeal lies at a very simple level. Its simplicity seems to be more closely related to its total



effect than is the case with other Shakesperian tragedies but, as it is suggested, this impression is deceptive. From one point of view, *Othello* is narrower in scope than the other tragedies; it does not have the wide political, philosophical, and religious implications of King Lear, Macbeth or Hamlet. Its emphasis is more personal and psychological, though not exclusively so. But whatever the play may lack in range of reference it more than makes up for in depth, power and subtlety.

Othello is a tragedy of faith enkindled, destroyed and renewed; of radical misunderstanding and incomprehension between father and daughter, husband and wife, general and lieutenant, and of a love so intense and sublime that it could only breathe the air of absolute trust and certainty, so pure that when it is tainted by mistrust it degenerates into the most hideous and deforming hatred, as "lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds" (Shakespeare, Sonnet 99).

### Venice and Cyprus:

The action of Othello illustrates a pattern which is common to many of Shakespeare's plays, that of movement from a comparatively sheltered place to a wilder one, ending with the beginning of the journey back. Othello begins in Venice, and though it soon moves out to Cyprus and never returns, the closing moments of the play look back from the tragic chaos to the orderly processes of the city state, and the powerful impact of the opening scenes remains with us throughout. Venice is very far from being a mere background to the action of the play; rather, its presence is felt almost like that of another character. To the Englishman of the seventeenth century, Italy generally and Venice in particular had many associations, favourable and unfavourable. It was a republic, with a reputation of religious and political tolerance. It was also dazzlingly successful as a commercial centre. Venetians, like all Italians, were held to be extremely cunning, and the women were believed to be sensual and sophisticated. At the time during which the events of the play are supposed to take place (in 1571, some thirty-five years before the first performance), Venice was involved in a struggle

with the Turks, and was in some sense regarded as the champion of Christendom.

Venice was considered to be a civilized and well-ordered republic. This sense of Venice as a society where order, reason and justice are operative is enhanced when we see the great scene in which Othello and Brabantio each state their case to the assembled council. At this point the wider national and political significance of Venice meshes in with Othello's situation. This meeting of public and private worlds is embodied in the action by the two separate search parties which converge on Othello's lodging, one bent on state affairs, the other seeking redress for a private grievance. The news of the Turkish threat to Cyprus puts us in mind of Venetian responsibility for safeguarding the christian heritage. But we can not wholly forget the commercial aspect of this responsibility, for we are reminded of it by the presence of Othello, the alien who is employed by his "very noble and approved good masters" to defend the republic and its possessions. For all its dignity and courtesy, the relationship between Othello and the signiory is



that of employee and employed; the bond that links them is wages. This scene shows us, then, an ordered state committed to reason and justice, but it also contains hints that the reason and the justice are too summary and short-sighted, the tolerance not based on full understanding of the issues and passions involved.

But Venice contains not only sober and law-abiding magnates; Iago the wily schemer and Roderigo the foolish sensualist are also its representative inhabitants as is Emilia who typifies commercial calculation applied to private life as well as a somewhat permissive sexual morality. Above all, Venice contains Desdemona. Just as Shakespeare takes the stereotype of the blackman and creates Othello by playing on that stereotype, so he creates in Desdemona a character who upsets the Elizabethan image of a typical Venetian woman by departing from conventional expectation while seeming to satisfy it. The physical movement of the principal characters from Venice to Cyprus corresponds to a psychological movement from the calm and security of rational order, where individual energy is shaped

and supported by social forms, to the chaos of emotional turbulence, of individuals thrown on their own inner resources. The storm which comes as a prelude to the arrival of Desdemona and Othello in Cyprus is a compact metaphor for this passage from security to disorder. The sea itself, as it appears in the language of the play, embodies those ideas of richness and strangeness, power and danger, fruitfulness and bereavement which typify the new world which the characters have come into. And it is neither accidental nor unimportant that we should associate Othello with the sea, even though he is a soldier. The sea has something of the quality of Othello's world, with its "antres vast and deserts idle".

Venice, Cyprus and the sea are therefore more than geographical features of the play; they are part of its dramatic symbolism, and an understanding of what they meant in Shakespeare's day will give us a livelier sense of the relationship between character, action and setting in the tragedy.

### The Source of the Play:

Shakespeare found the story of Othello in a collection of Italian stories called the Hecatommithi by Giraldi Cinthio, an aristocrat and philosophy professor of Ferrara. This book was published in Venice in 1566 and translated into French by Gabriel Chappuys in 1584. Shakespeare could have known the work either in the original Italian or in the French translation, but no English version is known before 1753.

Cinthio's collection is divided into ten "decades" or groups of ten tales. Each group deals with a single topic, and the story on which Othello is based comes from the third decade, which is devoted to "The Unfaithfulness of Husbands and Wives".

While the plots of Shakespeare's play and Cinthio's story are recognizably similar, there are many differences in character, atmosphere, emphasis and tempo. Some of these differences are an inevitable result of converting a narrative into the more compressed and direct medium of drama, but others show Shakespeare's enriching his them by expanding hints in Cinthio



and giving a greater depth to Cintio's rather wooden and conventional characters. Where Cinthio gives us one somewhat sordid world of sexual intrigue and jeaalousy to which both Iago and Othello belong, Shakespeare put them in different worlds and made a tragedy out of their collision.

The simplest and most obvious of Shakespeare's additions concerns the matter of names. In Cinthio, only Desdemona or Disdemona as he calls her (the name is derieved from two Greek words meaning "ill-fated soul" ) is given a name. All the other characters are identified by their role, (e.g. "the captain") or their relationship (e.g. "the ensign's wife"). Othello is simply "the Moor". Obviously in a play the characters would need to have proper names.

Brabantio does not appear in the original tale, except in the phrase "the parents of the lady" and the character of Roderigo is entirely Shakespeare's creation

The character of Iago is given immense depth and complexity in

Shakespeare's play. In Cinthio, he is simply a handsome villain who is in love with Desdemona, and, finding that his love is not returned, resolves to destroy her. He does not engineer the captain's (Cassio's) dismissal, which happens quite independently. Furthermore, Othello tells him of Desdemona's pleas on Cassio's behalf. All this makes the Iago-character a straightforward, rather melodramatic villain, very different from the fascinating and mysterious figure we find in Shakespeare.

Emilia's character and role undergo a similar transformation though not such an extensive one. In Cinthio, she knows about her husband's plot but is afraid to speak out. In Shakespeare, her shocked horror at finding out what her husband is really like is not only deeply moving, it also suggests that if Iago's own wife was unaware of his villainy, Othello can not be considered too credulous for being taken in by him.

As can be expected in a play, the action moves to its climax much more rapidly than in the original story. The crucial incident of the handkerchief is handled by Shakespeare with far greater

deftness and subtlety (in Cinthio, Iago steals the handkerchief himself, while Desdemona is holding his three-year old daughter). But as far as the plot is concerned, Shakespeare's most striking improvement on Cinthio is in the death scene. In the Italian tale, Othello and Iago murder Desdemona by beating her with a sand-filled stocking and then pulling the roof down on her bed. This is not only crude - and impracticable in a theatre - but, as Cinthio handles it, puts a good deal of emphasis on Othello's desire not to get caught for the murder. In altering the manner of Desdemona's death, Shakespeare has at the same time transformed the scene from melodrama into high tragedy.

If we come to Shakespeare's play from reading Cinthio's tale, we soon realize that we are in a different world. Shakespeare creates the world of Othello principally by the language he uses. We may briefly note the areas in which Shakespeare developed the linguistic richness of the play. The first is in the account of Othello's courtship which takes up a bare sentence in Cinthio; the second is in the storm scene, and the imagery associated with it, which does not occur in Cinthio at all, and the last is in the





strand of imagery connected with magic and witchcraft which finds its visual focus in the fatal handkerchief. Together they go a long way to create the distinctive atmosphere of Shakespeare's Othello, an atmosphere wholly absent from the original source.



## **Part II**

### **Suspense and Its Formal Functions In Othello**

This part is devoted to how Shakespeare creates suspense in Othello and then uses it for formal purposes. In chapter I below, I will discuss the creation and formal function of suspense in the play. In chapter II, I will discuss in detail Othello's character and his relations especially with Desdemona, Cassio and Iago. And in chapter III, I will discuss how the action in the play admits impossibilities and violence.

### **Presentation of Characters and Suspense:**

There are two group of elements in Othello that are used to create suspense. The first one is the delayed presentation on stage of some important characters which may be said to be done deliberately in order to make the audience or the reader wonder and ask questions about the characters until they appear on the stage.

At the beginning of the play, there are only Iago and Roderigo on the stage and they talk about an event which has already happened and it is not until they go and tell it to Brabantio that we realize that their conversation refers to Othello and Desdemona's secret marriage. We only get Iago's attitude to their secret marriage until Othello's appearance which is as late as in the second scene. The tension climbs up especially when Iago and Roderigo inform Brabantio about his daughter's secret marriage. At this point the reader or the audience's curiosity is aroused about the protagonist and what will happen to him.

Then, another important character, Cassio, who is the source of



jealousy for Iago (as a result of his missed promotion) and suspense and jealousy for Othello (as a result of Iago's influence on Othello) is introduced to us much more later after Othello's appearance. This also seems to have been done deliberately since he has a quite important role in the play. He is an innocent victim for Iago and Desdemona's suspected lover. Therefore, he is kept as a mystery or suspense until the second act.

Such delayed presentation of some important characters helps to build up suspense in the play. As a result of this delayed presentation, we first experience suspense and only then are we presented with the characters who will be involved in it. From beginning to end the play involves so much suspense that, like Othello, after a time the reader or the audience can not bear suspense anymore and feels impelled to action. I think Shakespeare aims to establish a similarity in the attitude towards suspense between Othello on the one hand and the reader or the audience of the play on the other. As a result of Shakespeare's exaggerated use of suspense, the reader or the audience's mind gets confused just like Othello's mind and he or

she is prepared to accept or justify Othello's deeds even if they are extremely horrifying actions.

The second group of elements that are used to create suspense is the early revelation of some characters' plans so that to the degree to which they will be realized becomes a matter of suspense as well. Thus suspense is used to manipulate the audience or the reader of Othello so that he or she is led to respond to the characters, to take sides in the action, and make judgements on them.

Iago's plots for revenge perhaps constitute the best example of building suspense by early revelation. He informs us what he intends to do before he takes action. We learn about his plans mostly from his soliloquies and partly from his conversations with Roderigo. Similarly, Roderigo also has plans to win Desdemona. As a result of their similar goals, they collaborate with each other to achieve their evil plots.

Moreover, we are also presented with the possible motivation of Iago which makes him determined to take revenge as well:

"I hate the Moor,  
And it is thought abroad; That twixt my sheets  
He's done my office;..."

( I, iii, 384-386 )

As we can understand from this quotation, again we come across with suspense and jealousy, because Iago is jealous of his wife and Othello since he suspects that they committed adultery.

When Iago builds up Roderigo's trust and support in him, he decides to use him for his own benefit in order to succeed in his own plans for revenge:

"Thus do I ever make my fool my purse."

( I, iii, 381 )

Immediately after this, we are presented with the primary source of suspense which is:

"After some time to abuse Othello's ear,  
That he is too familiar with his wife."

( I, iii, 393-394 )

from then on we are led to ask questions for the rest of the play



about whether or not Iago's plots will become successful.

At this stage, even Iago who seems to observe and know everything far more than any other character in the play, has doubts about how to achieve his own plots for revenge. This means that he has to work on them in detail:

"I ha't, it is engendered..."

( I, iii, 401 )

From now on, every time Iago appears on the stage, we are informed about the of his plots. Since he does not waste any chance which fortune offers him, his plot is at least organized and goes as far as having a number of murders in it; Murder of Othello, Cassio and Desdemona.

As Iago gains progress in this way, the reader or the audience gets restless and wonders about the time when Iago's true identity will be revealed to the other characters in the play. However, His true identity and evil intentions are to remain a mystery to them until the end of the play when he partly succeeds in his plots.

The only person who knows about his evil side and deeds is Roderigo, and he is the only one who can expose him. However, he is killed because the excitement of the reader or the audience which is maintained by the suspense element in the play is required to be at the top until the end of the play.

When the violence in the play becomes unbearable, things get out of Iago's control. As a result of this, Iago, who has been a good plotter from the beginning, used the others for his evil desires and controlled everybody is now doubtful about his fate:

"...This is the night

That either makes me, or fordoes me quite"

( V, i, 127-128 )

This is the climax for Iago since he is going to be faced with the result of his deeds; either success or fall.

Finally, when Iago's mask falls down exposing him completely, the mystery is solved, the suspense ends as well as the play itself. Furthermore, there comes the relaxation alongside the clarification for the reader or the audience who was in the grip of suspense throughout the whole play.

### **Othello's Character and Suspense:**

The manipulation of the reader or the audience is very significant especially with respect to Othello's character and actions. Othello is repeatedly led to tragic action because he is unable to bear suspense. With his aversion to suspense and consequent tendency for violent action, Othello emerges in the play as a representative of Renaissance man who is torn apart by doubts and vainly attempts to overcome them by seeking social security and mental clarity. The relations between Othello on the one hand and, on the other, Desdemona, Cassio and Iago and some lesser characters become immensely significant in this context since they all help to build up the "suspense" in the play.

The protagonist, Othello, is in search of a secure status and marrying a person of high rank is the only solution he finds. He does not belong to Venetian society and this is a constant source of insecurity for him. In order to get rid of this insecurity and to secure his place in the society, he marries Desdemona. However, he is faced with more chaos due to his social inexperience, ambiguities he is faced with, cynicism, jealousy



and inferiority complex. Such conflicts corrupt Othello's personality as well as his love for Desdemona:

He expresses his love for her as follows:

"O my soul is joy"

( II, i, 186 ).

Such a statement would make it seem that Desdemona's love means a constant source of joy for his soul. That is, the spiritual aspect of his love seems to be stronger than the physical aspect. However, his love is gradually qualified in the course of the play.

... In an earlier speech, for example, he says: -

"But that I love the gentle Desdemona,  
I would not my unhoused free condition  
Put into circumscription and confine"

( I, ii, 25-27 ).

That is he exchanged his love for his freedom. Equating thus his love with his freedom is not very complimentary for his love.

Another striking thing about Desdemona is that she is frequently referred to or seen as an object by the others as well as Othello.

For example, Iago says to Brabantio:

**"Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags  
Thieves, thieves"**

**( I, i, 80-81 ).**

One would expect Othello to respond differently. However, in a deep sense he also treats Desdemona as an object in order to achieve his aim of having a better reputation. Since what he feels towards her is not a pure love, he thinks that Desdemona also feels in a similar way:

**"She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd  
And I loved her that she did pity them"**

**( I, iii, 110-114 ).**

Since Othello believes that he does not deserve Desdemona because of his position in the society, he marries her secretly without Brabantio's permission.

In addition, the dukes and the senators are also aware of this fact, and therefore, he is challenged to answer Brabantio's accusations:

**"But, Othello, speak,**

Did you by indirect and forced courses  
~~Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?~~ --  
Or came it by request, and such fair question,  
As soul to soul affordeth? "

( I, iii, 110-114 ).

However, once he was married Desdemona, Othello knows that he will not be punished and barred from her since Venice is in war with Turks; Thus, his social position as a soldier and the Turkish war give him the courage he needs to accomplish his secret marriage:

"If you do find me foul in her report  
The trust, the office, I do hold of you  
Not only take away, but let your sentence  
Even fall upon my life"

( I, iii, 116-119 )

Later, when the war is over, Othello receives a letter ordering him back to Venice. For Othello, this letter means that Venice does not need him anymore. And it is not an unexpected consequence that he murders Desdemona after reading the letter:



**"Or did the letters work upon his blood, "**

**( IV, i, 270 )**

In this situation, for Othello, returning to Venice is like losing all that he worked for since there is the danger of being separated from Desdemona and losing his reputation both of which are of vital importance for him. Therefore, instead of letting them be taken away from him by someone else, he takes violence into his own hands.

Indicators of status are above anything else in importance for Othello and he reveals it himself in his own speeches:

**"Most potent , grave, and reverend signiors,  
My very noble and approved good masters"**

**( I, iii, 76-77 ).**

But such qualities are superficial and may be deceiving since they do not show the inner self of a person. However, Othello is not aware of this and therefore, he easily believes in outward appearances. He is deceived by Iago's appearance who seems to be a trustworthy, an honest and an affectionate person. Othello's inexperience and his giving importance to superficial things all lead him to commit his big mistake.

Among these superficial things, his honour is the primary thing with which Othello is obsessed. For instance, he commits violence in order to protect his honour when he is made to believe that Desdemona and Cassio were having a love affair. We can say that his honour is one of the main motivations as well as suspense and jealousy which are the other causes of his violent actions. Most of the time, he has conflicts in his mind while he struggles to find the truth. As a result, he becomes restless about his own thoughts and he questions himself:

"But why should honour outlive honesty?"

( V, ii, 245 )

However, he sacrifices his love for his honour, and he even sacrifices himself.

"An honourable murderer, if you will;

For nought I did in hate, but all in honour "

( V, ii, 294-295 ).

His honour is above anything else for him. But on the other hand, it is his honour which leads him to his destruction.

Another aspect of Othello's character is that he is socially inexperienced. Iago easily recognizes this weakness in Othello

and sets most of his plots by taking advantage of it. When Iago decides to create suspense in Othello's mind about Desdemona's faith, first of all he tries to persuade him by pretending to be an honest friend of his who is only after protecting him and his reputation. However, he feels that his words have not produced as much effect as he expected. As a result, he tries to use this weakness of Othello and, at that point, he makes up a generalization about Venetian Women:

"I know our country disposition well;  
In Venice they do let God see the pranks  
—They dare not show their husbands: their conscience  
Is not to leave undone, but keep unknown"

( III, iii, 205-208 ).

By saying "I know our country disposition well;", Iago quite directly points out that Othello is a foreigner who knows nothing about Venetian society, women and their manners. In this way, he asserts his social superiority over Othello and gains his trust cunningly. It is possible to consider Othello as being innocent due to his social inexperience, especially if we are to imagine what kind of a lifestyle Othello lives. He is a stranger to the society in which he lives and serves and it is obvious that it is



not his usual habit to mix with society. Therefore, he does not know how to behave in society let alone among the aristocracy. For instance, he talks spontaneously without thinking, states things directly and he is unable to make good conversation:

"Haply, for I am black,  
And have not those soft parts of conversation"

( III, iii, 276-278 ).

What is more, Othello does not know much about people because he is not a social person, and so he easily trusts and accepts whatever is told him without searching for the truth just like he does with Iago:

"This fellow's of exceeding honesty,  
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,  
of human dealing:"

( III, iii, 262-264).

Another weakness of Othello which helps Iago is that he is unable to bear suspense. As soon as he hears about Desdemona and Cassio, he immediately creates conflicting ideas inside himself because he has already got married with a girl who is from a higher class. Due to this situation, Othello is afraid that

Iago's words might turn out to be true. He therefore loses his temper quickly even at the thought of suspense and admits this fact to Iago:

"Think'st thou I'll make a life of jealousy?  
To follow still the changes of the moon  
With fresh suspicions? No, to be once in doubt;  
Is once to be resolv'd."

( III, iii, 181-184 ).

Such a statement explains how Othello approaches the concept of suspense. He immediately prefers to commit violence even at the thought of suspense.

In short, if we consider Iago's plots like a game of chess, we can see that he is always ahead since he knows what kind of move Othello is going to make; He observes Othello carefully. He knows how to influence Othello and he is even able to foresee what kind of reactions he will get from Othello.

And finally, if we are to consider Othello's relation with Cassio, we can see that they have a very good relation in the beginning of the play until Iago's interference. He manages to convert

Othello's admiration for Cassio into jealousy since Othello lacks the nobility and good upbringing which Cassio possesses.

Cassio, probably, is the kind of person that Othello wants to be like. He bears all the good qualities which an ideal gentleman should have like good breeding, honesty, nobility, respectability and such things that led Othello to trust him and choose him as his lieutenant instead of Iago. Iago compares himself with Cassio in the following words; Mentioning Cassio's social finesse:

"As masterly as he; Mere prattle without practice  
Is all his soldiership: but he sir had the election,"

( I, i, 26-27 ).

Moreover, according to Iago, Othello's friendship with Cassio as well as his sympathy and affection are the other reasons for getting the promotion:

"Preferment goes by letter or affection"

( I, i, 28 )

Also, Cassio is younger and handsomer than Othello, hence, Iago thinks that he suits Desdemona better as a husband:



"And I dare think, he'll prove to Desdemona  
A most dear husband..."

( II, i, 285-286 ).

When Desdemona arrives in Cyprus she is well-comed by Cassio. As it was a custom to kiss a lady's hand in greeting her and Cassio does so. However, it is intentionally misinterpreted by Iago because it is a part of his plan to abuse Cassio's kind behaviours as an alibi for the pretended adultery:

"He takes her by the palm: ay well said,  
Whisper: as little a web as this will ensnare a great  
A fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do: I will catch  
You in your courtesies:"

(II, i, 167-170 ).

Iago hates Cassio because he got the promotion which he himself extremely desired to have. In order to become Othello's lieutenant, Iago needs to prove him that Cassio does not deserve the trust he put on him and that he may betray Othello at any time. So, he devilishly plays a trick to Cassio and gets him drunk while he is on duty which was given to him by Othello. Since carrying out fully one's duty has first priority for Othello, Iago takes Cassio's promotion back and gives it to Iago.

However, getting the promotion does not seem sufficient to Iago; he takes a further step to achieve his cruel plan for revenge. His next step is to make Othello believe that Cassio betrayed him in the past as well:

"Did Michael Cassio when you woo'd my lady,  
Know of your love"

"He did, from first to last...Why dost thou ask?"

( III, iii, 95-97 )

In this speech above, Iago gradually leads Othello to suspect that Cassio and Desdemona were seeing each other before the marriage. And then, he continues the conversation in order to persuade Othello that there is an ongoing relationship between Cassio and Desdemona:

"I did not think he had been acquainted with her"

"O yes, and went between us very often."

"Indeed?"

( III, iii, 100-102 )

And in the end, he manages to put the question into Othello's head which is about Cassio's reliability:

"Is he not honest?"

( III, iii, 104 ).

The relationship between Othello on the one hand and Cassio and Iago on the other, is a fine example how Shakespeare bases motivation on character rather than on the story. Due to his state of mind and his position in the society Othello is in confusion or "chaos". Also he has a compound personality which unites certain features in Cassio's and Iago's personalities. We can say that Cassio and Iago have opposite characters. However, Othello's more complex character is a combination of both of these personalities. He has ambitions and plots like Iago but at the same time he is honest and spontaneous like Cassio. I think in Othello, Shakespeare wants to point out that when a person is in an alien society, he is very much inclined to make great mistakes and cause great tragedies. At the same time, could Othello also be an example of the self-seeking Renaissance man whose goals inevitably cause him to conflict with his society. The greatest mistake which Othello makes is that he prefers to believe in the suspicions created by Iago. His credulity makes us wonder if he subconsciously has already laid the foundation of similar doubts in his mind, and hence, we can compare them to a sleeping monster who was waiting to be awakened by Iago. When this monster completely takes over and controls Othello, then the tragedy begins to unravel itself.



### **The Action and the Impossibilities:**

In Othello, most of the acts of violence do not seem to be justified by the relevant objective conditions. When we follow only the concrete actions of the characters the impossibilities, and thus the unnecessity of such suspense and violence becomes more visible.

The first and most important point to make clear is that there is absolutely no time for Cassio and Desdemona to get together. They travel in separate ships to Cyprus and after a short time of their arrival, Othello comes and finds Iago, Cassio, Desdemona and Emilia talking altogether on the shore. Later, when we see Cassio and Desdemona having a conversation, They are never alone. In short, there is no evidence for their relationship.

Another condition to be considered is Othello's reaction to Iago, Cassio, and Desdemona. Othello does not believe in Cassio who is his close friend and faithful lieutenant, but instead, he believes in Iago who is a revengeful villain. Despite the fact that Iago creates too many doubts about Desdemona and Cassio's

fidelity out of nothing but simply illusions, Othello almost never questions or has doubts about Iago's honesty even if there are many reasons hinting that Iago is seeking for revenge.

Meanwhile, even the play has a contradictory part in it concerning whether or not Othello's approach to Iago is doubtful:

"Thou dost conspire against thy friend Iago"

( III, iii, 146 ).

This speech of Othello shows that he is aware of Iago's conspiracy. Somehow, for the rest of the play Othello behaves exactly in the opposite way and foolishly believes in whatever Iago tells him without any doubt. He treats Iago in such a way as if he is not the one who accused him of conspiring against Cassio. There is no explanation for the sudden divergence of Othello's reactions to Iago.

As mentioned above, Othello does have reasons to suspect Iago. First, because Othello chose Cassio as his lieutenant and the second is the gossips about Othello and Emilia as is stated

~~in her speech to Iago which is another reason for his revenge:~~

**"And made you suspect me with the Moor"**

**( IV, ii, 148)**

What is more, the case is the same with Cassio. Although he received the promotion that could be Iago's, still he never suspects the possibility of a revenge-taking. So, when Iago offers him more drink, he accepts and ends up getting drunk. This leads him to lose his promotion. However, he repeats the same mistake for the second time and gives Iago another chance of benefit by listening to his advice of approaching Desdemona for his reconciliation with Othello. Similarly, the other characters like Desdemona and Roderigo as well bear the same weakness towards Iago and tend to believe in whatever he says but, there is no justification for them to react in such a way.

~~Othello's decisions on committing violence also constitute another~~  
problem. His decisions are too quick and sudden, and what is more, they are unfair too. In fact there is no necessity for any kind of violence.



### **Conclusion:**

Such qualities like death, extremity and contradiction that makes the play seem to be unrealistic are the essences of a tragedy. But the more closer and deeper we inspect Othello, the better we realize that some parts of the play do reflect the reality. Don't we have jealousy, suspense, plots, conflicts as well as death and extremities in our lives? Yes, we do. The successful use of these themes enable a work to speak to every human soul, thus, making it universal and discerning it to appear as a masterpiece among the others as it is the case in Shakespeare's Othello.

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