Iago and Othello in Shakespeare's Othello

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Introduction

With the tale of love, betrayal and jealousy, Shakespeare has plotted Othello from the collection of tales of the Italian writer Giovanni Giraldi. The tales have different kinds of love, which include marriage. Literary critics have observed that Shakespeare included various ideas in his play that are directly linked to the stories written by Giraldi. The Tragedy of Othello was written in the year 1603. The drama is based on the story of a Moorish captain written by Cinthio in 1565. The play revolves around two primary characters: Othello, who was a general in the Moorish army, and his clever ensign Iago. The play includes different themes like revenge, betrayal and racism. Various literary films, dramas and operas have adopted the play. Professional communities still perform the play in their theatres.

Discussion

The play belongs to Othello. However, Iago also plays a significant role. The character has the most substantial dialogue in the play. He also represents the archetypal villain. From the start of the play, Iago is portrayed as the villain. He was also brilliant and easily overrode the other characters. He manipulates the others while controlling the actions of characters and traps them in his net of lies. Other characters consider him honest while he, under cover of honesty, expands his control over their roles and activities. In the same way, by playing with the weaknesses of other characters, he gets close to them and achieves his desired goals (Alkoli, 419). Many critics, including Harold Bloom, have focused their attention on the role of Iago and supported the ideas about his role as the villain. The literary critics of the twentieth century have focused more on Othello.

Various characteristics are associated with the character of Iago. He is the main antagonist of the play. He plays the standard-bearer of Othello. His wife, Emilia, was the attendant of the wife of Othello. Iago's most important personality trait is his hatred of Othello. He dislikes the hero of the play. He often devises a number of plans to destroy the hero. He gradually and deliberately told Othello that his wife had an affair with Michael Cassio, who was the lieutenant of Othello. The role of Iago was first played by Robert Armin in Shakespeare's earlier productions. Armin played typically intelligent and smart roles. The character of Iago is merely the ensign.

Shakespeare closely follows the tale of Cinthio while composing the play Othello. In that story, the

ensign suffers from wanton lust for the wife of the Moor. Iago is somehow related to that character who has a lust for power and self-purpose. Iago fought for Othello and became his close and trusted advisor. At the beginning of the play, Iago was unfairly passed over for promotion to the rank of lieutenant. He successfully plots to demote Cassio in the eyes of Othello. While doing this, he brings about Othello's downfall. His friend Roderigo also helps him in plotting with the hope that after the end of Othello's rule, he might get the affection of Desdemona, the wife of the hero. After removing Cassio from the scene, he began his work to make Othello believe that his wife had a certain unfair relationship with Cassio. Iago's character goes through a number of plans that are meant to gain power and rule over other aspects.

The Machiavellian art and the tactics implied by Iago are successful as the other characters of the play trust and consider him a truthful person. He mostly shows noble actions that compel his companions to believe in his honesty (Geng, 281). Othello kills his wife because of Iago's dominant scheme. However, Iago's wife unfolds his treachery, after which he immediately kills her in a rage. Critics have different views on the representation of Iago's character by Shakespeare. The writers discuss the complexity of Iago, which shows that he played a treacherous and faithful role at the same time. Western critics portray the character as a psychopath. Some of the writers are of the view that fear compelled Iago, and it was not his malice that led him to deceive the hero of the play.

In our daily lives, we have been driven by certain evil forces that were attached to Iago. Being human beings, we have certain lust and greed in our will and intellect. However, the most critical point is that there are very few people who are selfless in this world. Shakespeare, in this regard, has tried to portray the inner instinct of humans, which sometimes makes them worse than beasts. We have friends, peers, and faithful followers. We also encounter certain unbearable situations when we see that our most loyal friend, like Brutus in King Lear, becomes an enemy just to fulfil his lust for power or a particular goal. In the same way, the character of Othello is highly impressive to the readers, but it also loses its glory when trapped by the close aide Iago.

Othello was brave and a competent general of the Moorish army with a Venetian background (Rajeswaran, 47). He was technically trapped by the military officer and his close friend. After killing his wife on the charge of adultery, he was unable to face the truth that was revealed by the wife of Iago. He instantly kills himself. Iago is then charged with treason and the killing of his wife.

Conclusion

Concluding the discussion on the play Othello and the character of Iago, we have the idea that jealousy, betrayal and love are the primary motives in our lives. In our practical experience, we also face certain jealous, treacherous and loved people. The lust unveiled in the character of Iago reveals that man could be worse than beasts when he leaves the fundamental principles of humanity. Despite the complexities of the figures, Shakespeare successfully unfolded the real picture of human society. Studies continue to elaborate on the different themes of the play.

Works Cited

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