Iago’s Resentment and Cassio’s Promotion in Othello

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In the play Othello, the character named Iago is an illustration of individuals who are never satisfied. Regardless of the individuals persuading Othello and making sure that Cassio is integrated into the system, Iago seems to have other issues within him. Cassio is given the position of lieutenant, a position that makes Iago feel uncomfortable. At the start of the play, the individuals struggle to make sure that Othello offers Cassio the position of lieutenant. When Othello appoints the young and energetic man to serve as lieutenant, Iago is enraged and feels uncomfortable with the appointment. This action introduces the main reason that Iago develops hatred for Othello. The character is now determined to see Othello fall. Vengeance for Othello’s appointment of Cassio as lieutenant is the sole reason Iago wants to eliminate Othello.

Development of Iago’s Hatred

The fact that Cassio is at a higher rank (lieutenant) makes the antagonist feel insecure about his standing with his boss. The physical appearance that seems to suit Cassio’s new position becomes an issue for Iago. The character does not want to see the new lieutenant perform duties that involve being in charge of all individuals at a lower rank (Iago being one of them). Iago resents the young gentleman because of his position. In return, Iago equates the individual’s actions with those lacking human qualities. For instance, in the opening scene, Iago is featured referring to Cassio as a ‘spinster’ and ‘bookish’ (1.1.23), while Iago himself, despite being an experienced soldier, was passed over—“…God bless the mark…his Moorship’s ancient.” These actions explain why the jealousy inside Iago tends to grow, and it becomes so excessive that he is determined to eliminate the other subjects. The fact that Cassio acts in a mannerly way with Desdemona makes Iago’s fury unbearable. After Cassio learns that his actions are making Iago uncomfortable, he asks the person not to let the actions cause impatience. He claims that extending good manners is not a fake thing when Cassio says that “tis my breeding” (2.1.97-99) and also adds that “…gives me this bold show of courtesy.” (Shakespeare, c. 1603)

Othello is a remarkable character in Shakespeare’s work and forms the central theme of the play. It is through the individuals that the characteristics of other characters become evident. The main plot of the play revolves around this important character, and all other characters are developed through his actions and the manner in which each responds to his sentiments. The noble Moor, Othello, is the victim of the actions that Iago undertakes from the start of the play to the end, where Othello ends up

ruining his life. The entire conspiracy against Othello is presented using individuals who command respect from him. Iago uses these individuals to make sure that plans laid for the downfall of the noble Moor become a reality. For instance, Iago uses Othello's close friend, Michael Cassio, to suggest the infidelity of Othello's wife. Despite Desdemona being a loyal and faithful wife, the character ends up being used as bait to trap Othello. The main aim of the antagonist is to seek revenge for the actions of Othello, which Iago finds offensive. Rather than embracing the success of others, Iago's jealousy drives him to perform actions that are not justified. Iago represents stereotypical individuals who demand positions that do not match their skills. In order to haunt Othello, the character presents a handkerchief that he claims the lieutenant received from Othello's wife. This makes Othello furious; as expected, the wife or the lieutenant would have to receive the consequences. Iago is relieved of his grief when he learns that Desdemona is dead. The plan to destroy Othello seems to work well for Iago. However, no one seems to perceive Iago's actions (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

The other target is the lieutenant; Iago wants to make sure that no one holds a position above his. As a result, he works to make sure that Cassio will no longer work as a lieutenant. It should be noted that assigning Cassio as lieutenant acted as one of the triggers for Iago's jealousy and fury against Othello. Therefore, the end of the lieutenant would make Iago feel relieved of his irritation. In spite of the character's elimination from Othello's faithful individuals, he is more obsessed with finding that Othello has been destroyed completely. According to Iago, Othello is the cause of his grief and needs to be eliminated in order for him to find peace. Iago forms a party with an envious character, Roderigo. Roderigo is jealous of Othello because Othello married Desdemona. With the help of Roderigo, Iago's plan to destroy Othello seems to work well. At the end of the play, readers are presented with the death of Othello, which is a result of the hardships imposed by Iago. It is possible to conclude that all the evil actions Iago commits are a result of jealousy (Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d.).

References

Shakespeare, W. (c. 1603). *Othello*. Folger Shakespeare Library. https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/othello/read/

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