

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S THE OTHELLO PLAY: AN IRONY

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### ABSTRACT

Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. There are: Situational, Verbal and Dramatic irony on Shakespeare's 'Othello' play. Situational irony occurs when there is an incongruity between what is expected to happen and what actually happens. So it sometimes called irony of events. There are many situational ironies in the paper. For example; the first, Iago and Roderigo are walking on the street of Venice near the house of Brabantio. They informed Brabantio that his daughter has eloped with Othello. They came there because Roderigo loved Desdemona and Iago has promised him that he will help him to get her. The second, Emilia steals Desdemona's handkerchief and Iago use this handkerchief for cheating Othello. The third, when Cassio loses his job, Desdemona insists Othello to call Cassio on the job and she doesn't know that it was Iago's plan to bring Cassio and Desdemona together to cheat Othello.

We can see Verbal irony in the paper. Verbal irony which a person says one thing and means another uses words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of the literal meaning. There are many example of Verbal irony in the study as when Iago says "I am not what I am." and other example is in the first act when Iago tells Roderigo that 'I am for you'.

Therefore there are examples of Dramatic irony in the 'Othello' play. Dramatically irony is frequently contrasted with verbal irony. It occurs when the reader / audience knows something that the characters don't. Shakespeare uses dramatic irony in that all of the characters betrayed by Iago trust him absolutely. Roderigo believes Iago to be his friend, assisting him to advance his relationship with Othello. Othello himself labels his ensign ' honest Iago ' and trust him with advising him on his wife. Desdemona uses Iago to help with reinstating Cassio to his position with Othello. Cassio allows Iago to talk him in to drinking and losing the respect and position he held with Othello. Finally Emilia is betrayed into giving Desdemona's handkerchief to Iago which brings about the chain of events which end in tragedy. Thus, the irony play has much use of irony and through this device only Shakespeare actually gets success of reaching the reader /audience and making them feel the tragedy.

**KEYWORDS:** Shakespeare, Dramatic Irony, Othello Play

### INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare, the world genius wrote greatest dramatists of England who worked as a guide, philosopher and an intimate friend. Shakespeare wrote 36 plays, 154 sonnets and 2 long poems. He wrote tragedies, comedies, historical plays and tragic-comedies. He wrote 4 world famous tragedies: 'Othello' 'King Lear', 'Macbeth', 'Hamlet' 'Julius Ceaser' etc. He focused on many devices and he introduced many new things like comic relief, use of irony. In the study, we find many new techniques in his plays. Shakespeare is also famous for comedies like: 'As you like it' 'Mid-summer Nights Dream', 'All Ends well that Is Well'.

He was also famous for problem plays like 'The Tempest' 'Merchant of Venice'. Also we study historical Shakespeare's plays rely largely on irony. There are three kinds of irony presented in this novel. They are: situational, verbal, and dramatic. Irony plays an important role in Othello.

### **Irony on the Othello Play**

In the tragedy Othello, Shakespeare uses many important literary elements, but one of the most important is irony. Shakespeare's use of irony in Othello has a great impact on the play. The irony is what makes the story so fascinating and different than any other stories. Irony is also used to add suspense and at the same time to make the reader wonder what is going to happen next. "Verbal irony is a contrast between what a character says and what he clearly means." These techniques Shakespeare uses in his tragedy Othello to show the reader the intended effect of actions, his characters are signifying, without letting the other characters entertain suspicions. Also he is the best example of someone who knows how to use a verbal irony very well. Everything he says is always the opposite of what he thinks.

### **The Othello Play**

*Othello* is one of Shakespeare's four great tragedies and thus a pillar of what most critics take to be the apex of Shakespeare's dramatic art. *Othello* is unique among Shakespeare's great tragedies. Unlike *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, which is set against a backdrop of affairs of state and which reverberates with suggestions of universal human concerns, *Othello* is set in a private world and focuses on the passions and personal lives of its major figures. Indeed, it has often been described as a "tragedy of character". Cassio was the one Iago wanted dead or out of his position. At the end of the play, Cassio was the only one that did not die and Othello actually promoted him to a higher position. In the end Iago never accomplishes what he started to do to get back at Othello and take Cassio's place. Both Othello and Iago treat their wives horribly. Both killed their wives even through their innocence. Iago killed his wife because she was working against his plan. Othello killed his wife because he thought she cheated on him when she really didn't. Before he killed her, Iago used his wife in a way that helped him to betray Othello. She was a good friend of Desdemona's and she worked against her friend without knowing it. She took Desdemona's handkerchief because Iago said he wanted it. Iago then placed the handkerchief in Cassio's room to make him look guilty. Also, throughout the play, it seemed that Othello was the only one who didn't know the truth.

### **Verbal Irony**

In the play Othello, Shakespeare uses many literary devices to help the reader understand the theme of the story. One of those many literary devices used in the play, is the wide range of irony. Verbal irony is a technique that Shakespeare uses in his tragedy Othello to show the reader the intended effect of actions his characters, most of all Iago, are signifying without letting the other characters aware. Verbal irony is defined as a figure of speech in which what is said is the opposite of what is meant. In the study we see Iago many times use this form of sarcasm and irony to enlighten the reader of his villainous plans without having to uncover his plot to the other characters and therefore making the play that much more convincing.

As the play starts out we are introduced to one of the main characters and one that will play the most important role of the tragedy, Iago. In Shakespeare's Othello, one of the most known quotes of the entire play comes from Iago,

"I am not what I am"

This phrase sums up what to me is the complete nature of our play's villainous Iago. From the very first act we see the first glimpse of Iago's callous nature and power of persuasion. With every character Iago has a different persona. Iago adapts his performance to suit that he is speaking. "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse",

In the first act Iago tells Roderigo that "You, Roderigo! Come, sir, I am for you" (Act I Scene ii line No 58). This statement is verbal irony because Iago is not actually "for" Roderigo. He is only using him as part of his scheme. He offers his help in exchange for some money, "Put money in thy purse"

### **Dramatic Irony**

Dramatic irony plays an important role in captivating the audience. Dramatic irony makes parts of a story more interesting for the audience to know something the characters don't. The strongest piece of dramatic irony which plays out throughout the story is the fact that the reader/viewer knows that Desdemona is innocent. Along with this, the audience also knows that Iago is really crooked. The reader knows all of Iago's schemes and lies. Othello knows none of these things. He believes that Iago is honest and that his wife is guilty of adultery. More instances of dramatic irony show up as characters think aloud to the audience through asides. Then, the audience knows what is going on when most characters don't. Dramatic irony is exciting and it makes the reader feel like part of the story.

### **Situational Irony**

Situational irony means what we expect exactly opposite happens in the play. Their audience plays an active role. All of them wish that the certain character should take a decision or work in this direction but exactly opposite happens on the stage.

In the beginning we see Iago and Roderigo on the street of Venice near the house of Brabantio. They have come to inform Brabantio that his daughter has eloped with Othello. We feel that they have come there with a good intention but we find that they have come there because Roderigo loved Desdemona and Iago has promised him that he will help him to get her. It is very ironic that Iago used all his money and cheated him. It is very strange that Roderigo follows the same man.

There is also ironic twist that Emilia steals Desdemona's handkerchief and uses it for the wrong purpose. Emilia doesn't know that Iago will use this handkerchief to cheat Othello.

It is also an incident of irony that when Cassio loses his job, he feels so upset. We being audience know it well that it was Iago who has made Cassio lose the job. But we feel so sad when Cassio approaches Iago to help him to restore his job. Desdemona also seeks Iago's help to regain her husband's love. Desdemona insists Othello to call Cassio on the job and she doesn't know that it was Iago's plan to bring Cassio and Desdemona together to cheat Othello.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Irony play a great role in "The Tragedy of Othello ". All the major characters in the play believe that Iago is an honest and trust worthy person. The tragic irony is that Iago fools them all. Iago is main reason for revenge against Othello. Iago's plan is to manipulate Cassio and Desdemona, so that it would appear that they are having an affair, which would break Othello's heart.

Othello is the hero of the play though not the center figure. It is Iago who becomes the central interest of the play.

It is Iago who is mainly responsible for furthering the actions of the play. Iago shares with Othello the center of the stage which does not happen in other tragedies of Shakespeare. Dramatic irony has a significant place in a tragedy. Dramatic irony means the occurrence of something on the stage which has a different significance than to actors. Thus, plays a role in the deception of Othello by Iago and in the tragedy of Othello's response. The irony of the play is demonstrated through Situational, Verbal and Dramatic irony. There are three kinds of irony presented in this play. Irony plays an important role in Othello of the study.

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