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THE THEME OF MANIPULATION IN OTHELLO



"I am not what I am. You, as sure as your name's Roderigo, if I were the Moor I wouldn't want to be Iago. I may seem to love and obey him, but in fact, I'm just serving him to get what I want."

-Iago, act 1 scene 1 line 65

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Manipulation is the act of controlling or influencing cleverly or unscrupulously. Othello is play full of manipulation and this theme is carried out throughout most of the play, mainly via Iago.

As the play begins, Othello and Desdemona had run off and gotten married without telling Desdemona's father, Brabantio. When Iago finds out he did not get the job he wanted, he makes sure the news get to Brabantio. Brabantio, who did not know about his own daughter's marriage, is finding out from two strangers. This allows Iago to take advantage of Brabantio's surprise and to come in between the newlyweds with his disapproval. Iago is trying to ruin Othello's marriage by sending Brabantio to Othello to express his dislike of the secret marriage. Brabantio is in such shock that he believes Othello used magic to get Desdemona to marry him. Iago's manipulation of Brabantio ruins the relationship between father and daughter and any relationship that could have been between Othello and Brabantio.

Iago is cunning, cruel and manipulative. He is considerably the strongest character within the play, with his ability to manipulate and control those around him. Othello's weaknesses; jealousy and a lack of control over his emotions as well as his insecurities, based on his age and his sense of racial inferiority and foreignness, are exploited by Iago as they make him the perfect target for manipulation. Iago persuades Othello to believe that Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio. He does this by telling Othello that Desdemona has not been faithful to him and he backs the claim through evidence that he planted. Iago also stages a conversation with Cassio to make it seem as if they are talking about

Desdemona when in actuality they are speaking about Bianca [a prostitute that is in love with Cassio. Othello overhears and is outraged. Othello is fed up of all the rumors and this results in a miscarriage of justice; his murder of Desdemona. Othello is self-righteous, believing he is executing justice in punishing Desdemona for her adultery. His act of justice is in fact unjust.

Iago also manipulates Emilia, his wife's simple-minded devotion towards him to get the handkerchief which becomes his final weapon for corrupting Othello's doubt towards Desdemona beyond repair. He also manipulates Desdemona's humanity which she shows for Cassio coincide with Othello's doubt in her fidelity.

Roderigo, a dissolute Venetian lusting after Othello's wife, Desdemona. Roderigo trusts Iago in the mistaken belief that Iago is paving the way for him to Desdemona's bed. While Iago makes Othello believe that his wife is cheating, he also manages to convince Roderigo that Cassio is sleeping around with Desdemona. Iago has now manipulated Roderigo's feelings. Roderigo is riled up, Iago convinces him to fight Cassio and of course he agrees. Roderigo loses unfortunately. Iago then runs to tell Othello, which results in Cassio losing his job. Iago convinces Cassio to use Desdemona to get back to Othello's good graces. This is a set up. Through manipulation Iago uses Roderigo to eliminate Cassio from the running of the position of general which he desperately wants.

Throughout the play, Iago displays copious amounts of deception and lies, manipulating characters to get his way. Roderigo is the first of his

many victims, which include Othello, Cassio, and Emilia. His deceptive and manipulating ways lead to the death of not only those he manipulated, but to whatever part of his sanity that remained.

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