

Murder of the Sleepless Soul by the Society: Madness and the Theoretical Suicide in William Shakespeare's *Othello*

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ABSTRACT: This article concentrates on the character, Othello, who is driven mad in William Shakespeare's *Othello*, and endeavours to reveal the ins and outs behind his destruction by Iago. He becomes successful in making Othello doubt and murder his chaste wife Desdemona. Hence, Iago tries to poison Othello's mind by providing false information about Desdemona. For instance, the plot of the handkerchief and his reference about Cassio that he dreamt where he had talked about his emotions for Desdemona. Unfortunately, Othello somewhat believes Iago's words. Nonetheless, it must also be stated that Iago is the one who is entirely responsible for igniting the spark of jealousy in Othello's mind. The Moor would not lose his sanity and murder Desdemona and take his own life away if Iago did not deceive him so cunningly. As Iago is the main cause of Othello's downfall, he can also be regarded as a 'killer' because Iago himself leads Othello and Desdemona towards the path of devastation.

KEYWORDS: *Desdemona, Iago, Madness, Murder Committed by Using Words & Gestures, Othello, Suicide*

I. INTRODUCTION

The concepts of madness and suicide have captivated and mystified generations of scholars. Shakespeare seems to be obsessed with the portrayal of insane characters and their ultimate ruin in his tragedies. In fact, many of the Shakespearean tragic characters, including Othello, may have certain flaws in their characters but they would not take their own lives away unless there were strong and negative influences from the external forces in the society. In other words, they are made utterly frustrated and depressed by the people, their words, actions and behaviour. For instance, Iago is the 'external force' in William Shakespeare's *Othello* who destroys Othello.

In the title of this paper, the term 'Sleepless Soul' indicates the 'restless or disturbed person' and the word 'Society' is an umbrella term that includes one person or more depending on the circumstances and their strong influences on others within the society. In addition, 'Theoretical Suicide' means that the concept of suicide in Shakespeare's *Othello* is just a theory; it is not 'fact' - hence, it is not suicide but murder. In *Othello*, Iago is a part of society who harms Othello, Desdemona and beyond. Indeed, he himself is not 'society' but he surely represents society in the sense that there are countless Iagos existing in the world! Iago works as an evil "supernatural" force in the tragedy. As a remark:

The events of the tragedy normally have consequences beyond those of the individuals involved and are related to the order of society and the world in general. The downfall of the character usually offers us a tragic view of existence, usually a view which emphasises the weakness and insignificance of humans in the face of more powerful, usually supernatural forces. (Quin, 2008, p. 1)

The shrewd Iago makes Othello lose control over his mind and act irrationally (as the decision of murdering Desdemona and committing suicide is not logical and it is the proof of madness). Now, the key thing is that the actions issuing from the scheming of the villain are devastating to Othello because the ensign will practise "upon his peace and quiet, even to madness" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 925). Certainly, he does so, and Othello is driven into a frantic, weird kind of madness. In a word, "Othello goes mad with sexual jealousy." (Rocha, 1980, p. 71). Therefore, he is led by Iago towards devastation.

In this sense, Othello has not committed suicide; indeed, he is murdered by the instigator or a social agent named Iago! It would be clearer to understand by an easy example- the so-called 'suicide' is similar to the way a murderer stabs and kills someone or someone who pushes another person down from the top of a building. The one we call 'murder' is committed by using weapons like knife, pistol etc. which can be seen and

touched but the murder in the guise of the 'supposed suicide' is committed by using weapons that cannot actually be seen or touched such as, spreading rumour, constantly pressurising someone psychologically, hurting someone's self-esteem badly and the like. For instance, Iago drives Othello towards the point of insanity by spreading rumour about Desdemona. He suffers psychologically as his honour is at a stake and his self-respect is ruined.

As a result, Othello murders his wife. Here, a new term can be coined i.e., 'murder committed by using words and gestures'. Broadly, Iago commits the murder of Desdemona and Othello by using his cunning words and gestures. However, after finding that Desdemona is not adulterous, Othello loses his rational mind more and acts as a mad man; he stabs himself with a dagger and dies beside Desdemona's corpse. S. Zimmerman states in *Shakespeare's Tragedies* that in *Othello*,

we see a crime 'committed by a man who united the two natures, calmness and ardour, rashness and circumspection- the traits which make the murder possible, and those which allow us to admire and to pity the murderer'. (as cited in Smith, 2004, p. 39)

II. MURDER [NOT SUICIDE] OF OTHELLO BY IAGO

Othello, a North African Moor and a senior general in the Venetian army, is an excellent character: self-sacrificing, romantic, full of imagination, and reluctant to jealousy. But, he is also open to trickery, and if wrought to passion, expected to behave with little thinking and no delay. This brings insanity of anger and vengeance, and "leads to the hero's loss of self-control" (Rocha, 1980, p.8). "If the name Othello is derived from the Greek verb *ethelō*, which means "desire," "will," or "want," as pointed out by Fineman, the play might thus be about desire" (Chun, 2006, p. 93).

Othello has married Desdemona, a young lady from Venice. They have a strong bond between them since Desdemona has respected Othello's love by eloping with him. She has deceived her father so that she can stay with Othello forever. Undoubtedly, Othello is a leader of great stature. The Venetians honour him because of his valour as a leader.

Certainly, Othello is not jealous by nature. For instance, he is called 'great of heart' by Cassio. Desdemona knows it well in her heart that Othello can never become jealous. As she confidently utters:

My noble Moor
Is true of mind and made of no such baseness
As jealous creatures are. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 935)

Furthermore, Othello's temperament and actions echo no jealousy either. Even if Cassio is extremely handsome and is a person of sophisticated manners, Othello does not feel the least jealousy and appoints him his go-between. Besides, Othello leaves Desdemona in Iago's care to pursue her to Cyprus. He praises the social virtues of Desdemona; he appreciates her ability of singing well and being an excellent hostess. All these points indicate that Othello is not an envious person by temper.

Many wars and the sufferings of battle make a person shattered. The stresses of daily things are nothing as compared to the anxieties of war. However, Othello has proved himself as a good leader and earned the respect from the Duke. Even after being a Negro, Othello leads an army, which is full of white soldiers. Certainly, it is a matter of honour but at the same time it gives birth to stress because he may constantly feel that the white soldiers may not wholeheartedly accept him as their leader. The researchers find the flavour of racism when Iago confesses his hatred for the Moor to Roderigo. Furthermore, Iago thinks that Othello has an illegal affair with his wife Emilia:

I hate the Moor,
And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
He's done my office. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 922)

André Green (1979) puts forward in *The Tragic Effect* that "Iago is speaking the language of envy" (as cited in Chun, 2006, p. 99). According to John Wain (1968) in "*Macbeth-Casebook Series: A Selection of Critical Essays*", "...he (Bradley) understands the essential truth about him (Iago), that he was less than a complete human being" (as cited in Rocha, 1980, p.76) since love has been left out of his heart, left out so entirely that he does not know it or doubts its presence. Iago is determined to destroy both Othello and Cassio because he wrongly believes that he has been deprived of the status that he deserves. He cannot tolerate the fact that Cassio has been appointed as a lieutenant. Iago's "...wish to be Othello's ancient is that he has got a private and selfish reason" (Chun, 2006, p. 88). Camus suggests that

Iago, Shakespeare's greatest enigma, can only be understood inwardly by the actor who takes up the role. 'Knowing' the character of Iago is an ontological rather than an epistemological problem. (Keys, n.d., p. 78)

He follows Othello to accomplish his "peculiar end" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 917). He finishes the speech with a tyrannical line:

I am not what I am. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 917)

which could be contrasted with God's reply to Moses when He is asked what His name is: "I am who I am" (*Bible Hub*, n.d.). Furthermore, if it were only the position of lieutenant Iago is jealous of, it would be stupid for him to make Othello murder Desdemona, as in this case Iago could not get the position whatsoever.

Iago taunts and humiliates Othello in a very cunning manner. He knows it rather well that Venice is a society where there are opposing notions about race and its importance. The point that the Moor is a stranger defines his segregation in the society. Therefore, his extreme egotism regarding his bravery in state-affairs, and henceforth, too, his insecurity, that can be mentioned in terms of "ontological insecurity" (Rocha, 1980, p.75). Othello is not comfortable in the classy society of Venice. It is known to us that the social aspects influence the psychological health of the individuals. The sociological viewpoints most generally used to elucidate psychological disorders in society are the "structural strain theory (Merton, 1957), anomie theory (Durkheim, 1951), the social stressor theory (Thoits, 1999), and the labeling theory (Scheff, 1999)" (as cited in Bessa, 2012, p. 31).

So, in his mind, Iago labels Othello as an 'outsider' and chooses imagery related to black and white only to rouse the Moor's sense of insecurity. Iago's detestation of Othello can be partly seen as racially inspired. This is obvious in his use of racially disapproving terms such as his depictions of Othello in animal-like words that can also be read as fear of Othello's supposed racially typical sexual ability and his depictions of Othello as innocent and effortlessly led by the nose. The title of the play repeats the dogma of racial dissimilarity by shaping Othello as 'other' and inviting the spectators to view him in these terms.

But it can also be profitably read as drawing attention to the fact, not that Othello is different, but that he is constructed as different by the society in which he lives. (Quin, 2008, p. 2)

Just like the "Satan", Iago "suggests" Roderigo about winning Desdemona's love; he also "...flatters the heart with some persuasion of profit, pleasure, content..." (Adams, n.d., p. 266). Then, Roderigo lusts for Desdemona and it can be classified as "refractory" madness since his "perverse affections" make him "frantic". His "mad affects have bad effects" (Adams, n.d., p. 275) as his lust for Desdemona is so skillfully utilized by Iago and it becomes easier for him to destroy Othello.

In the intense deception of Iago, nothing is better or more effectively managed than this trick "to put Othello on his guard against the very jealousy he is seeking to bring about..." (Kellogg, 1866, p. 188). Peter Szondi (2002) states in *An Essay on the Tragic* that "jealousy is love that destroys by wanting to preserve" (as cited in Chun, 2006, p. 81). In fact, twenty-one references to 'jealous' or 'jealousy' are found in *Othello*. It seems to us that Othello is successful in handling the stresses of war but another stress named 'jealousy' has entered his life through the wicked plot of Iago and "evil has nowhere else been portrayed with such mastery" (Bradley, 2005, p. 207) as in his character. The causes behind Othello's jealousy may be summed up in the following manner:

1. Othello has a very frank nature and he trusts absolutely.
2. Sometimes, he is unable to think logically.
3. He trusts Iago so much and appreciates his intelligence, honesty, sincerity and originality.

All the myths about the women and their promiscuity are known to Othello. Though Desdemona is a chaste and faithful wife, the fraudulent myths do leave a negative impact on Othello. These act as a saw; they break his confidence down and shatter his heart forever. Therefore, Othello can never get Brabantio's words out of his brain:

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
She has deceived her father, and may thee. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 922)

Undoubtedly, the warning of Brabantio has left an indelible scar in Othello's heart and mind. Iago's conspiracy adds fuel to the already existing fire! The presence of paranoia is ever there in Othello's mind and Iago finds it rather easy to seduce Othello into suspicion and to madness afterward. But, the greatest mistake

ever made by Othello is his blind faith in the devil Iago! He is unable to discover the real face of Iago and falls a victim to his malicious web gradually. Since Othello is new to the conjugal life, he does not want to leave Desdemona behind. Subsequently, just before journeying towards Cyprus, Othello decides to leave her in the hands of Iago whom he calls 'honest':

My life upon her faith! Honest Iago,
My Desdemona must I leave to thee: (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 922)

Iago's use of imagery marks the difference between his manipulation of Othello and Cassio and Roderigo. In Cyprus, the drunken soldiers fight and Othello wants to know about that from Iago who quickly answers, "I do not know...in quarter and in terms like bride and groom" (Shakespeare, 1973 p. 927). The villain knows that this kind of language is going to influence Othello negatively. Then, Iago so manipulatively blames Cassio for the scuffle but cunningly defends his actions by saying:

But men are men: the best sometimes forget:
Though Cassio did some little wrong to him...
Yet surely Cassio, I believe, received
From him that fled some strange indignity,
Which patience could not pass. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 928)

Now, by using language brilliantly, Iago has become honest again in the eyes of Othello and obtained Cassio's trust as well. As Iago falsely asks Cassio, "are you hurt Lieutenant?" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 928). Then, Iago wants both Cassio and Desdemona to spend time together. He persuades Cassio to talk to Desdemona if he wants to get back his designation and status. Iago knows that if Othello sees Cassio talking to Desdemona, then the Moor will be more jealous. Iago also knows that these interactions will make sure not only Othello's downfall but also Cassio's. Actually, Iago makes Othello appear as those people

who, from some physical or moral peculiarity of character, form a picture (*tableau*) of everything. No matter what knowledge, intellect, courage, or good qualities they may have, these men are unfit to command." (Galton, 2004, p. 78)

Now, Iago moves on from a blurred comment to rather open statements of danger- "It were not for your quiet nor your good...to let you know my thoughts" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 931). The planting of the seed in Othello's mind is done quite successfully once again by Iago. The entrance of suspicion into Othello's brain has severe negative consequences. The cunning Iago gradually makes the Moor jealous and even hypocritically tries to behave like a saint when he tells Othello:

Iago: O beware, my lord, of jealousy!
It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 932)

Othello has a habit of jumping to conclusions without proper judgment and Iago uses it for his own interest. Once, Iago tells Othello to "look to [his] wife, observe her well with Cassio", then Othello becomes so suspicious about his marriage. As he says, "why did I marry?" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 932). Iago uses imagery to both influence and scare Othello. Othello's depressed mentality finds its fullest expression when he sadly utters,

Farewell the tranquil mind; farewell content!
Farewell the plum'd troop and the big wars
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell! (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 933)

The following quotation displays the way Iago tries his best to make Othello jealous:

Othello

By the world,
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not...

Iago

I see, sir, you are eaten up with passion.
I do repent me that I put it to you.
You would be *satisfied*?...
And may – but how? how *satisfied*, my lord?...

Othello

Death and damnation! O!...
Give me a living reason she's disloyal. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 934)

One cause why a number of readers consider Othello 'easily jealous' is that they totally misunderstand him in the initial part of this scene. They think that he is shocked and doubtful the moment Iago speaks softly "Ha! I like not that" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 930) as he sees Cassio leaving Desdemona. Nonetheless, actually, it takes a long time for Iago to stimulate astonishment, inquisitiveness, and then severe concern—in no way yet jealousy—even about Cassio; "and it is still longer before Othello understands that Iago is suggesting doubts about Desdemona too" (Bradley, 2005, pp. 434).

Moreover, Iago intentionally tells Othello about Desdemona, "She did deceive her father marrying you/And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks/She loved them most" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 932), to indicate that Othello is racially different from others in the society. Actually, he cannot integrate, not because of the fact that he is different, but because the social order shapes him as different. This affects Othello very badly. His depression is visible as he says, "[Desdemona's] name...is now as begrimed and black/As mine own face" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 934). So, it can be said that Iago has successfully used image in two manners: firstly, to influence Othello; secondly, to make the image visible in Othello's mind so that the Moor can relate to it and the image is also a sort of 'dagger' to make him feel unconfident and secluded from the citizens around him.

Now, Othello's flaring anger is provoked to a pitch that only "blood can quench" (Kellogg, 1866, p. 192). He starts having confused thoughts. Othello is unable to produce coherent speeches. His ideas seem disengaged as well. Then, Iago uses his next weapon- he attacks Othello with visual details, which leave awful scars in Othello's mind- "O monstrous, monstrous!" Now, he believes in Desdemona's adultery:

Now do I see 't is true. Look here, Iago;
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven:
'T is gone.
Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell!...
Oh, blood, blood, blood! (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 934)

The seed of doubt planted in the mind of Othello has become a tree now and the first flower is picked by Iago. He receives his long-desired lieutenantcy after swearing submission to "wronged Othello" in a nearly formulaic scene, and, paradoxically, answers, "I am your own for ever" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 934). In fact, Othello himself ought to pronounce this line to relate to the reality of the condition, "for Othello's possession by the devil Iago is now complete" (Rocha, 1980, p. 72).

Iago cleverly drops hints before Othello about the relationship between Desdemona and Cassio. At the middle of *Othello*, Cassio is talking to Desdemona but he leaves quickly after seeing Othello and Iago. Then, the villain utters, "Ha! I like not that" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 930). Now, Othello becomes curious and wants to know more from Iago but he does not tell anything more. Here, Iago's motive is very clear; he wants that the General himself should be busy in thinking. This is the very technique Iago uses in the play so that Othello forms his personal conclusion.

Because of Iago's manipulation and control, Othello's sophisticated and gentlemanly language turns into something chauvinistic and pessimistic. It displays that the General is a victim of extreme jealousy now. In act III, Iago repeats the words of Othello only to give birth to a 'monster' in the Moor's mind! As a result, Othello states:

By heaven, he echoest me,
As if there were some monster in thy thought
Too hideous to be shown. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 931)

In *Othello*, the 'handkerchief' has diverse meanings to the different characters. Othello gives the handkerchief to Desdemona as the first gift and she considers it as a symbol of Othello's love. The red signifies

love and the red strawberries like red hearts on the handkerchief indicate the sign of love and are also connected with the red marks from the first night of love on the wedding sheets of Othello and Desdemona.

Although Othello's reason and judgment are never diseased, he permits them to become covered by the profound passions moved up within him by this wicked genius, Iago who tells him:

Such a handkerchief
Did I to-day
See Cassio wipe his beard with, (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 934)

Iago is expert at doing things with words. At the same time, he also discerns how to do things with the eye: the wicked eye. Recalling the "ocular proof" Othello demands Iago to submit in order to prove Desdemona's infidelity – "give me the ocular proof" (Shakespeare, 1973, 933). "For the phrase "ocular proof," *OED* credits Shakespeare's *Othello* for its first appearance in the early seventeenth century. About a century before, "ocular" means "a bone of the skull" (*OED* A1), which evokes double holes, or the double "ciphers" in a skull" (Chun, 2006, p. 98).

Now, ocular proof could be the evidence that can be seen, or the evidence that is associated with the skull – the sign of death. Ocular may also belong to the list of word containing the sound *O* in *Othello*. The relationship of eyes and the skull may propose that the 'ocular proof' is evidence that can be seen but really not present (as the unreal relationship between Cassio and Desdemona) and cannot be seen but exists (as death or the purity Desdemona).

Just like Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Othello "is an iconophile, which means that he just loves to visualise or create the picture or image of" an adulterous Desdemona "in his mind" (Ziaul Haque, 2013, p. 116). The distorted images emerge in Othello's mind after "the perceptual information is accessed from memory, giving rise to the experience of 'seeing with the mind's eye', 'hearing with the mind's ear', and so on" (Kosslyn, 2006, p. 195). "His illusions are mental regressions" (Ziaul Haque, 2013, p. 116) as Freud (1900) utters in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "a full hallucinatory cathexis of the perceptive system" (as cited in Tyson, 1994, p. 67).

But, Iago has ever recognised the handkerchief/napkin as a *fazzoletto*. At any rate, Shakespeare read two successive entries in the lexicon- *fazzo* and *fazzoletto*- that permitted Shakespeare (through Iago) to influence Desdemona's relationship with the cultural implication of the piece of cloth and its connection with bed sheets. Iago's knowledge entwines the handkerchief/napkin with their bed by explaining the translated word [*fazzoletto*] as a compound, as a *fazzoletto*. The handkerchief/napkin becomes factually a "false bed" (Ghisalberti, 2011, p.30). "Othello's belief that Desdemona has given the handkerchief to Cassio and the sexual connotations of the gift direct him toward the murder of his wife" (Ziaul Haque, 2013, p. 143). Here, 'handkerchief' is equal to 'life'.

The counter-evidence has simply fortified his faith in her unfaithfulness; the delusional structure accommodates it by outspreading itself to Emilia and making her a procuress. In the following interview, Othello merely refuses to have faith in her earnest oath: "Are you not a strumpet?" he asks and she replies:

No, as I am a Christian.
If to preserve this vessel for my lord
From any hated foul unlawful touch
Be not to be a strumpet, I am none. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 940)

Desdemona repeatedly denies Othello's words but the Moor angrily utters:

I cry you mercy then;
I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
That married with Othello... (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 940)

So, Othello has no interest in getting facts; he has gone crazy because of the 'exciting causes' and is just looking for a confession from Desdemona. In all the characters that turn out to be mad, the expert psychologist notices immediately the weird corporal, psychological, and ethical organisation that establishes the intrinsic tendency. He notices that the germ of the disease has been grafted there in the beginning, and only waits for the impact of sufficient stimulating causes to lead to its thorough development.

Now, Othello is fearful of not being acknowledged, at the same time as he is fearful of Desdemona's passing his handkerchief to Cassio, as it is the "recognizance [i.e. token] and pledge of [their] love" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 946). It is also the acknowledgment of Desdemona's love towards him too. So, for Othello, loving Desdemona without the handkerchief is impossible.

Therefore, the handkerchief appears as an 'obsession'. In "The Purloined Handkerchief in *Othello*", Peter Rudnytsky (1985) develops the idea of the handkerchief as a fetish and draws in a deconstructive reading: the play "dramatizes the consequences of the unconscious fantasies" (as cited in Chun, 2006, p. 101). The importance of the handkerchief is aptly echoed in Act 3, Scene 4 when Othello warns Desdemona that an Egyptian "charmer" gave it to his mother:

That handkerchief
 Did an Egyptian to my mother give,
 She was a charmer and could almost read
 The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it
 'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father
 Entirely to her love; but if she lost it
 Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
 Should hold her loathed and his spirits should hunt
 After new fancies. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 935)

Othello lays emphasis on the handkerchief again in Act 5, Scene 2:

It was a handkerchief, an antique token
 My father gave my mother. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 947)

The missing handkerchief becomes a symbol of 'life' and 'death'. As Desdemona does not have it, therefore, the missing handkerchief represents the 'death' of her! In Othello's mind, disgrace and dishonour cause most intense passions and "bitter pangs" (Burton, 2009, p. 225). Therefore, the translation of the handkerchief by Othello is a sort of sacrifice that guides him to the theoretical reality about Desdemona's disloyalty." As Othello says:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
 Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!
 It is the cause... (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 944)

Othello believes this false information because suspicion and jealousy have already captured his heart and mind. According to Hegel, "reason and reality exist as an objective truth experienced by everything in the universe. Reality is objective truth, whereas the submission to pure subjectivity is madness. For Kierkegaard, madness exists in two ways. The first, "subjective lunacy", is a distorted subjectivity in which the afflicted possesses inwardness, but this inwardness defies reason" and this is exactly what happens with Othello. He keeps reason far away defiantly!

"The second, "objective lunacy", is an absence of subjectivity altogether. There are both objective and subjective forms of madness for Kierkegaard, but when put in the context of true reality and true reason, Kierkegaard claims that the only way to access this is through Faith, which is a form of subjective lunacy" (Robey, 2012, p. 6) that Othello suffers from because he has 'faith' in whatever Iago wants him to believe!

Othello
 Should know
 Believing Iago blindly
 All hell breaks loose
 Desdemona's killed, he does lose (Ziaul Haque, 2019)

Then, Iago cunningly promises Othello that he will murder Cassio and deceitfully requests the Moor so that he does not take the life of Desdemona. Michel Foucault names four consciousnesses of insanity in the introduction to part two of his book *The History of Madness* so as to describe the contradictory modes of thought concerning reason and madness all through the Classical Age. Foucault's depiction of these four consciousnesses can be applied to several historical eras along with the Classical Age to effectively explain the notions of existing insanity.

According to the summarization of "...these four forms of consciousness" by Paul North (2011) in *Problem of Distraction*, we can logically fit Othello in the particular conditions called "thinking 'mad' (critical consciousness)", and "saying 'mad' (enunciatory consciousness)" because, as the tragedy moves towards its end, he thinks and speaks like a mad man! (as cited in Robey, 2012, p. 38) As insanity, like its imitations, is dangerous, perturbed, illogical, isolated- detached both from the self who does and the viewers who watch- the diagnosis is problematic. "In Shakespeare's plays that make this diagnosis, the speech of the mad characters

constructs madness as secular, socially enacted, gender and class-marked, and medically treatable” (Neely, 1991, p. 322). As Othello says,

Damn her, lewd minx;...
I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 934)

It is known that the “faults seen through passion appear much greater to us than they really are...” (Hazlitt, 1877). When Desdemona fails to present the handkerchief to Othello, he considers it as a ‘fault’ in her character and his extreme passion blinds his reason and sanity:

Lie with her! lie on her! We say lie on her when they belie her. Lie with her! that’s fulsome. Handkerchief,–confessions,–handkerchief. To confess, and be hanged for his labour. First, to be hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shake me thus. Fish, noses, ears, and lips. Is’t possible? Confess?–Handkerchief? O, devil! (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 937)

Indeed, the power and rage of passions are fierce “overbearing a man to those courses which in his sober and collected sense he would abhor” (Adams, n.d., p. 265). It means that Othello is so influenced by his jealousy and anger that he says and does things that he would never perform if his sense were rational. Though Plato admires madness as a form of celestial motivation, Othello’s madness is not certainly a gift from God! When Othello’s “mental agony” (Kellogg, 1866, p. 194) makes him fall “in a trance”, Cassio enters and asks Iago “What is the matter?” and Iago answers:

My lord is fallen into an epilepsy;
This is his second fit; he had one yesterday. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 937)

The close association between epilepsy and the vicious madness Shakespeare appears to have understood comprehensively and the hint becomes clear while Iago replies to Cassio:

No, forbear.
The lethargy must have its quiet course;
If not, he foams at mouth; and, by and by,
Breaks out to savage madness. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 937)

Othello’s mental torment reaches the climax in Act 4, Scene 1. Iago changes his strategy of attack here. He stops using vague words and indicative images and talks in a free manner about Desdemona: “...naked with her friend a-bed/An hour or more, not meaning any harm?” (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 937). Iago’s hypocritical words cause Othello’s pain to rise further. Othello becomes extremely annoyed after Iago tells him that Cassio has abused the handkerchief that Othello gifted Desdemona long ago. Iago uses this moment so craftily. He teases Othello again and convinces him that Desdemona is definitely at fault.

Now, Othello has no doubt in mind regarding Desdemona’s disloyalty. This negative thought gives birth to the most dangerous enemy of Othello i.e. ‘anger’. His own mistrust and anger take him far away from ‘reason’. As Othello utters, “How shall I murder him, Iago?” (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 937). Since “God rests in reason”, Othello should have acted reasonably but he does not “rest in reason” but starts violently to “move in passion” (Gibran, 2001, pp. 68-69). In other words, reason governs Iago who is not a ‘slave of passion’. In actual fact, he is ‘a slave of reason’.

R.D. Laing (1960) mentions in *The Divided Self* that “...a basically ontologically secure person will encounter the hazards of life...from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people’s identity” (as cited in Rocha, 1980, p.76) but Othello behaves just the opposite because Iago’s influence on him is so profound that Othello “sees everything through Iago’s eyes, he thinks Iago’s thoughts, and he even comes to talk Iago’s language in the end!” (Rocha, 1980, p.76).

There are events when it appears that others know our own minds better “than we do ourselves...” (*Analytical Behaviourism*, n.d., p.125). Similarly, Iago seems to know Othello’s mind better than Othello himself! Since, “madness is commonly seen as an invasion of the self...” (Jose, 2010, p. 1), Othello’s madness can also be viewed from the perspective of ‘demonic possession’, which, according to Nancy Caciola (2003) in *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, is “an intimate – and violent – invasion of the body” (as cited in Jose, 2010, p. 115).

It is clear how demonic Iago is! Just like a demon, he causes “a dramatic loss of identity” in Othello. It looks as if Othello has become Iago! It means that Othello’s “body becomes inhabited by” Iago. Indeed, insanity is an biological disturbance within the body, “while possession entails a demon physically entering the body from outside” (as cited in Jose, 2010, p. 115) and Iago works exactly like a demon, enters Othello’s mind from the outside, captures and pollutes his brain and causes organic disturbance in his body.

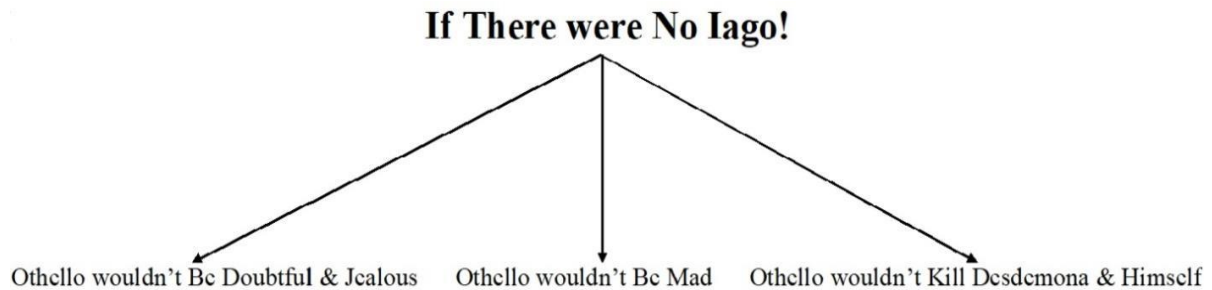


Figure 1. If There were No Iago!

The unawareness, disloyalty and stubborn desires make a man insane. Here, Othello becomes mad by giving credit “...to the father of lies rather than to the God of truth” (Adams, n.d., pp. 271-274). As ‘truth’ refers to something, pure, holy or celestial, so the unawareness of divine things is madness. In other words, he is in the ‘darkness’ or in the world of ‘ignorance’, which is a cause of his madness. Desdemona’s so-called infidelity causes anger in Othello’s mind.

Othello strangles Desdemona and kills her. He suffers from a particular type of madness, which is called “*desperate passion*”. His love is “disappointed in its excess...” His inner “world sinks into universal Fury” and he feels victorious after killing Desdemona. In fact, it is Iago’s achievement and Othello’s victory “belongs to Madness” (Foucault, 2001, pp. 20-27). Othello’s “anger...carries the spirits outwards, preparing the body to melancholy, and madness itself” (Burton, 2009, p. 232). Othello’s insanity is not a brief madness but of long continuation. It is a “...perpetual lunacy.” He is the “angry man none will deny to be a mad man” (Adams, n.d., pp. 267-285).

Perhaps, right after murdering Desdemona, Othello knows that his head is empty by now and “this was his ‘tragic’ wisdom” (Whitebook, 1999, p. 35). After the execution of the bloody action, the complete consciousness of his excessive and irrevocable grief comes over him with horrible force, and the feeling of absolute misery finds expression in these following words:

My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife:
O, insupportable! Oh, heavy hour!
Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe
Should yawn at alteration. (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 945)

Now, Othello’s insanity should be examined from the psychological point of view. Aaron T. Beck (1979) mentions in *Cognitive Therapy of Depression* that the “cognitive models of abnormal behaviour focus on the way people think about themselves, others and the world” (as cited in *Abnormal Psychology*, n.d., p. 319). It appears that Othello, the crazy Moor, is not only strained by combat but also has many difficulties in his life. The rumour about Desdemona’s scandalous affair and the loss of reputation work as catalysts in driving Othello insane. In fact, Othello’s psychological disorders are caused because of the

distorted cognitive processes – such as selectively attending to some information and ignoring other information, exaggerating negative feelings, expecting the worst, or making inaccurate attributions about events (*Abnormal Psychology*, n.d., p. 319).

Now, Plato thinks that there are four kinds of “Divine Madness.” They are- ““Madness of Prophecy”, “Madness of the Mystic”, “Madness of Poetry” and “Madness of the Lover”. Perhaps, Othello suffers from “Divine Madness” “of the lover. The gods that inspire this form of madness are Eros and Aphrodite.” In “Phaedrus”, Plato highlights this insanity as a result from facing aspects of beauty. But, it would not be unjust if it is mentioned that Othello does not go mad after “encountering semblances of” Desdemona’s “beauty”; he becomes mad because Iago makes him believe that Desdemona is adulterous and the Moor finds himself in the world of insanity because he fearfully thinks that he has lost Desdemona’s “semblances of beauty”! (Robey,

2012, p. 19). Furthermore, to borrow Plato's (2009) words from "Phaedrus", the thought causes "frenzy in which" he has "a difficult time trying to control" his "passions" (as cited in Robey, 2012, p. 19).

Certainly, "the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead" (*Bible Hub*, n.d.). Iago makes Othello suffer from spiritual suspicion, caused by the feeling of sin and the unintelligible and indescribable loss of God's kindness. As "self-sacrifice" is opposed to "suicide" (Saez, 2015, p. 53), what Othello does is not 'self-sacrifice'; it is neither a 'suicide' but a murder by the external evil force, Iago. There is no apparent connection between madness and self-sacrifice but there is a relationship between madness and suicide as it is seen in *Othello*. As said by Lupton in *Othello Circumcised*, Othello's suicide,

functions as a martyrological baptism in blood, an act that completes and terminates the era of the law. (as cited in Chun, 2006, p. 84)

Now, when Othello knows that Desdemona is actually innocent, he is actually in a place where "madness and non-madness, reason and non-reason are inextricably involved: inseparable at the moment when they do not yet exist, and existing for each other, in relation to each other, in the exchange which separates them" (Foucault, 2001, p. xii). Perhaps, it can be said that the vital theme of *Othello* lies in the conflict between external, social standards (represented by Iago) and individual, internal standards (the world of Othello. To use R.D. Laing's terminology, Othello assumes a "self" which is not his own-the "social self" of Venetian society offered by Iago and which does not at all fit the hero's larger-than-life nature" (Rocha, 1980, p. 74) but the social values represented by Iago crush Othello's individual or inner values. Iago achieves his retaliation by fabricating stories, or by telling lies - for instance, Cassio's sensual dream. In this sense, it can logically be said that Iago 'is' the murderer:

All was well,
Like the earth's spinning ever,
Albeit near was the hell,
As the Satan, Iago, started plotting however!

Frail as a newborn,
Naïve Desdemona was,
Dark as the coal turned the morn,
Othello doubted her, baseless was the cause.

The angel happily died,
As she had nothing to hide! (Ziaul Haque, 2019)

III. CONCLUSION

In the end, jealousy is irrational and the person, who feels it, surrenders himself to insanity. The same thing happens to Othello. Iago instills jealousy in the heart of Othello and makes it burn like a volcano. He even provides Othello with some fake proofs that get Othello out of reality. Then, it can be seen that he tortures himself with the fantasies of Cassio kissing on Desdemona's lips. Othello becomes utterly frustrated and believes that he has been robbed. Now, a new Othello is seen who has turned into a slave of passion. His peace of mind is gone; he is no more interested in war nor in his occupation. It seems to us that he has stopped living. He constantly demands proofs about Desdemona's immorality from Iago. Finally, Othello falls into the black hole of madness. If Iago did not turn Othello jealous and crazy, he would never murder his wife Desdemona and commit suicide. Therefore, it is rational to state that Iago is the 'murderer' whose cunning plans and wicked words have worked as sharp weapons in achieving his purpose.

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