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Title: The Tragic Hero Othello

A tragedy treats a drama in a majestic style where the hero is encountered with a series of sorrowful events. Othello, the most celebrated tragedy was written in 1603 by William Shakespeare. The play is famous for its universal appeal and comprises themes and characters that add to this appeal of the play. Every play of treatise by Shakespeare shares some elements of manipulation, and jealousy. The play has five key characters, but Othello is the most distinguished character in the play. Tragic heroes are generally very common in real-life and in the literature. The play shares the rise and fall of the protagonist, Othello. Othello suffers because of his own traits and character. He loved his wife but he was very jealous of any man who used to talk to his wife. Overall, Othello’s personality preserves all the characteristics of a tragic hero, Hamartia, Anagnorisis, Peripeteia, etc. Along with the tragic flaws, that play a key role in creating the tragic story of play Othello.

All Shakespearean tragic heroes face similar fates. Othello is a great soldier, a respected leader, and a man capable of standing proudly against the racism that Brabantio, Iago, and others wield against him. We know he is also gentle and loving, enough so that Desdemona loves him for the softer side of his nature. But through the machinations of Iago, Othello becomes the very thing he is at first wrongly accused of being: a brute and an animal. That is the tragedy of Othello: that he unwisely and naively allows himself to be reverted into what his detractors wanted to believe him to be. He murders his faithful wife, murders his own better nature, and finally takes his own life (Greenblatt et al.). As in every Shakespearean tragedy, all those who were touched by the evil of the corrupting of the hero die as well, the innocent and the guilty. So, in short, Othello is a tragedy because the good man he was is corrupted, twisted, and finally destroyed by his jealousy, the flaw in his otherwise admirable nature.

Aristotle stated, "A man doesn't become a hero until he can see the root of his own downfall." The term “tragic hero” originates from Greek tragedies, where it referred to the protagonist. Tragic heroes conventionally have a tragic flaw, Aristotle called it a hamartia, that induces their downfall as if by fate. It’s especially poignant if this flaw originally made the tragic hero a hero /likable. Othello, for example, is noble and proud at the beginning of the play. The audience admires him for his virtuous confidence. Yet this pride later renders him gullible and jealous because he can’t stand the idea of anything injuring his pride. Romeo and Hamlet are some other Shakespearean tragic heroes, however, Othello is the most pathetically tragic hero of his works.

For some characters to fulfill the requirements of a tragic hero, generally a tragic hero enjoys a noble character or status in society. Othello despite having a rough history, is general and he is also the commander of armed forces of Venice. Later in the play, he enjoys the status of the governor of Cyprus. His social ranking makes a tragic hero. According to Aristotle, a tragic hero is not perfect. He can be declared as great in so many of his characteristics, he has a noble heart. Even his good personality traits are admired by Iago when he speaks, “of a constant loving, noble nature [and] will prove to Desdemona A dearest husband”. His nobility is quite visible at many points in the play he stands fearlessly; his words at most of the points display his brevity and integrity. “Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them, Good signior, you shall more command with years Than with your weapons.” (Shakespeare) However, in the play, he begins to lose these traits. However, these traits of him began to fall, as the play progresses he is shown as violent, and no more loving to Desdemona.

One problem for Othello is that he is a Moore, which hurts his self-esteem. When it comes to tragic heroes, people can relate to them as human beings. The tragic heroes also experience a downfall, due to their tragic flaw, denoted as Hamartia. This downfall is the outcome of their actions stemmed from their free will and not the fault in their fate. Othello’s downfall is due to his tragic flaws; such as lack of self-esteem that makes him vulnerable to Iago’s manipulation. In addition to that, the play highlights a number of other detrimental traits in Othello’s personality. Jealousy is the most prominent attribute, that is declared as the ultimate cause of his demise. Gullibility coupled with jealousy and timidities craft his tragic fall. The core of all these issues is his insecurities for being a Moore. Since he is a black character and he is an outsider resulted in many insecurities. Owing to these insecurities, he is vulnerable to the trap of Iago, as he thinks he may not be a perfect match for Desdemona. He begins to believe that she did not deserve to be her husband, “She’s gone, I am abused, and my relief Must be to loathe her. Oh, the curse of marriage That we can call these delicate creatures ours And not their appetites!” (Shakespeare). Iago was very well aware of his insecurities and convinced Othello very easily that Desdemona is cheating on him. Othello, in the trap of his insecurities as well as Iago’s deception believed these lies. When he realized, his insecurities have taken over, he was already on the verge of his tragic downfall.

The tragic downfall of Othello is also set into motion. It begins when Otello is shown to be enjoying a high status in society. He seems to be very lucky, when he marries the love of his life, Desdemona. However, by the time a clear fall in his personality traits is observed coupled with the fall in his good times. His love for his wife also declines as indicated by his words for his wife who used to very dear to her. His equanimity is gone and he utters foul words, calls his wide a strumpet. Despite being a hero, he falls into the evil machination of Iago. However, his hamartia brings the doom and his reasoning is clouded with misunderstanding. His decision to kill Desdemona eventually results in a sense of guilt, referred to as Peripeteia by Aristotle. This guilt stems from the understanding that the reversal of fate is brought by not someone by the hero’s won wrong judgment about others and the things happening to him.

Tragic heroes also experience a sense of guilt, when they discover that the downfall is not brought by someone else by their own actions. this characteristic of a tragic hero is termed as Anagnorisis by Aristotle. Out of his mistrust, he takes the decision to kill Desdemona, as a punish of her evil actions. He believes he is killing Desdemona to do justice to her as if this is the purgation of sin, “Lets she should betray more man.” (Shakespeare). His strong sense of guilt is visible in his last dialogue, “Whip me, ye devils, From the possession of this heavenly sight! Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulfur, Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! —Oh, Desdemona! Desdemona! dead! Oh! Oh!”

Aristotelian tragic heroes also die a tragic death at the end, due to their own serious decisions. They are wounded spiritually and face death eventually, the same goes for Othello. After killing Desdemona, he also kills himself. However, the most heart-wrenching scene is when he realizes he is responsible for his own downfall. He repents the cruel deeds he had done, “one that loved not wisely, but too well, one that like the base Indian, threw a pearl away richer than all his tribe” (Shakespeare). Othello’s demise, inevitable downfall and his words of regret make the audience feel pity for him, demonstrating another characteristic of Othello as a tragic hero.

To sum up, Othello, the protagonist of Shakespeare’s play displays almost all the characteristics of a tragic hero. He plays an important role in the play, evokes emotions of sadness and pity among the audience. The tragic downfall of the hero progresses the story and in due course brings it to an end with the end of the hero. The tragic hero, Othello, teaches his audience so many life lessons. He is sometimes perceived as evil by the audience when the nobility of his character begins to show a decline. In addition, when he suffers because of his error in judgment and evil actions, the audience does not feel pity for him. He is considered as the wickedest person in the entire play but when he understands his doom and when he is remorseful, the audience feels pity for him. From the height of social status to his downfall, the story progresses and ends with the doom of tragic heroes.

**Works Cited**

Greenblatt, Stephen, et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 2018. /z-wcorg/.

Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Classic Books Company, 2001.