

### The use of Soliloquies in Othello

Soliloquy means talking to one's own self. During the Elizabethan times, soliloquy was regarded as an ordinary but a convenient way of imparting information to the audience or of developing the action of the play.

The real function of soliloquy is self-analysis or self-revelation, to bring out the inner spring of any character particularly the hero of the play. In Othello, there are seven soliloquies of Iago & two of Othello. In the first soliloquy (Act I, Scene iii), Iago reveals the secrets of his mind. He tells us the plan of how he is going to revenge upon Othello for appointing Cassio and passing him over the position of lieutenant. He tells us how he will set both Cassio and Rodrigo on Desdemona, to serve his purpose. This soliloquy further offers us an insight into Othello's character-how honest, good, simple and unsuspecting he is and how easily he could be duped by anybody.

The second soliloquy of Iago (Act II, Scene i), is nothing but an elaboration of his first soliloquy, and throws some fresh light upon the inner nature of Iago. He mentions that he lusts for Desdemona and wants to get with Othello "wife for wife" because some way or the other it has got into his mind that Othello has slept with his wife Emilia.

The third soliloquy (Act II, Scene iii), though short yet prepares the audience for his conspiracy against Cassio – whom he wants to disgrace and disqualify in the eyes of Othello by making him drink and make him commit a disgraceful act, particularly when he is assigned with the job of keeping the watch over the Cyprus and also of maintaining peace and order in the city.

The fourth soliloquy of Iago (Act III, Scene iii) offers a glimpse into the second stage of Iago's conspiracy against Cassio and Othello. Here Iago wants Cassio to press Desdemona to plead his case before Othello which will in turn intensify Othello's suspicion about her infidelity and will kill both Desdemona and Othello and this is what happens at the end of the play.

The fifth soliloquy of Iago (Act V, Scene i), reveals how Iago is going to poison the ears of Othello against Cassio and Desdemona. This soliloquy shows Iago's knowledge of human psychology, namely if Othello finds Desdemona's handkerchief in Cassio's hand, he is bound to suspect that Desdemona has some illicit relationship with Cassio and this suspicion leads to the tragedy of the play.

The sixth soliloquy is one of the shortest soliloquies of the play but it is quite significant because when Othello falls into a fainting fit due to his fits of anger, sorrow and hatred, Iago says to himself that many a foolish husbands like Othello can be easily led to suspect the infidelity of their innocent wives like Desdemona.

The last soliloquy of Iago reveals his further poisoning the mind of Othello against Cassio and Desdemona which led to Othello's most dangerous decision-murdering both Cassio and Desdemona.

The first soliloquy of Othello on one hand reveals his blind trust and on the other hand, it shows the seeds of suspicion about Desdemona's infidelity. We find how Othello becomes conscious of his advanced years; he is tempted to believe that wives of such men cannot be faithful to their husbands.

The second soliloquy of Othello is most significant and most pathetic. Here Othello hangs between his weakness for Desdemona and suspicion and jealousy against her infidelity. This soliloquy is one of the most painful and is a psychological struggle which the human mind can never think of with the passing thought.

A soliloquy is a thought that is read aloud, where the character may be talking directly to the audience, or the audience may overhear the character's private thoughts. The soliloquy allows the audience to know various secrets or schemes that other characters don't know anything about. Iago's soliloquies in 'Othello' are used as these are the only times at which the audience know he is telling the truth, but the audience still find it hard to trust him. The audience also get an insight into Iago's plan and how he is going to execute it. Iago's soliloquies have a big impact on the audience as we can see how duplicitous and manipulative he is, but realise how blind the other characters are to him. This aggravates us as an audience because we can see how it's going to end, but the characters still believe Iago and go along with his plans. In 'Othello' before Iago's first soliloquy, Cassio is given a promotion by Othello which Iago was adamant to. This is significant to the soliloquy because this explains why Iago has a lot of hatred towards Othello. Also previously, Iago befriended Roderigo and has agreed to gather information for him about Desdemona. This is also significant because in the soliloquy, Iago reveals his true feelings and thoughts of Roderigo. The purpose of Iago's first soliloquy is to inform the audience of his plans and real opinions of the characters. For example, Iago says "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse." In this Iago is talking about Roderigo. This exposes his true colours as he only uses Roderigo for his money, which he gets in return for information about Desdemona. Iago then goes on to say "if I would time expend with such a snipe but for my own sport and profit." This explains that he doesn't actually like Roderigo and is only spending time with him for his own fun and because he is making money out of him. If it wasn't for this soliloquy, the audience wouldn't be aware that Iago is using Roderigo. Iago then moves onto Othello and reveals his true opinions of him. Iago acts like a friend to Othello, but acts like an enemy. It is only revealed through his soliloquies.

These soliloquies establish Iago as the main villain and allow him to reveal his inner most thoughts. In his first soliloquy, it is the first time the audience sees Iago's true feelings towards Othello and Roderigo, "I hate the Moor," and "such a snipe." The fact that the first quote is so short means that it is very blunt and to the point. You also see his duplicitous nature, from him being loyal towards Othello before the soliloquy, to him desperately seeking revenge, "The Moor is of free and open nature/and will as tenderly be led by th'noose." This simile shows that Iago wants to exploit Othello's second fatal flaw, his gullibility or his, "free and open nature." This is also when we start to see Shakespeare's presentation of a villainous character and Iago starting to become increasingly evil. Another thing is that you see why Iago has become evil, "To get his place, and to plume up my will." Furthermore, he enjoys being evil, "my sport and profit." He revels in his villainous role in the play and is unpredictable at times which makes him all the more threatening. His careless disregard for whoever else his plans might affect and the lack of proof he needs before acting, "will do as if for surety," expresses Iago's scariest character trait: his impulsive nature. Iago portrays the inner-workings of his mind through the soliloquies and this enables us to see his thought process whilst he is thinking about his next dastardly deed, "How? How? Let's see..." and "Let me see now." This clever use of rhetorical devices makes him seem cunning and skilful because he is questioning himself; he has the answers to all of his questions. He is nearly always duplicitous in the nature of his plans so as to fool people into thinking that he is trustworthy enough. This trust is also extended to the audience because he is revealing the structure of his plans to them and them alone. This makes the audience feel like they have a higher status as they know about all the things that Iago plans and thinks about.

In Othello Shakespeare makes an important departure in his use of the soliloquy. Whereas in tragedies like Hamlet and Macbeth the soliloquy is monopolised by the hero, in Othello it is the villain who has the lion's share of soliloquies—eight soliloquies are assigned to Iago, whereas Othello has only three of them. An important reason for this departure is that the character of the hero in Othello is too straightforward and transparent to need much elucidation through soliloquies.

On the other hand, Iago is not at all what he seems, and without his soliloquies the reader or spectator would have been as much in the dark about him as the characters in the play. An important feature of Iago's soliloquies is that most of them occur at the end of scenes. These soliloquies foreshadow coming events and thus help in plot-development, in addition to their obvious function of revealing the mind and motivation of Iago.

Of the eight soliloquies of Iago, the first three have been characterised as epiphanies, and the remaining five as signposts. In the former group, he intimately reveals his nature, whereas in the remaining five soliloquies we see him first groping after a plan and then gradually seeing his way clearly towards successive steps of it. Thus these soliloquies reveal what Iago is going to do with respect to other characters.

The first three soliloquies serve the important function of giving to the audience significant information which they have no other means of obtaining. However, we have to make an important reservation about Iago's soliloquies—they are not to be taken as expressing objective truth, although they truly reflect his own mind. It is one of Iago's inventions, and gives us clear information about his state of mind; he is not under hallucination, he is in the subtler, but very common condition, which almost everyone experiences in some degree, of one who is entertaining a fantasy in order to feed a passion. Psychologically, Iago is a slighted man, powerfully possessed by hatred against a master who (as he thinks) has kept him down, and by envy for a man he despises, who has been promoted over him. The fantasy that comes most easily to him is that of crude copulation; it is his theme-song.

These three soliloquies are graded in their horror and heinousness, with the most horrible of them coming last of all. Their function is not to bring Iago closer to the audience, or create sympathy for him but to distance him from them, to create hatred for him. Iago's soliloquies are designed to make him progressively more repellent. They are the hairpin bends by which we descend into the abysses of his nature. They are there to offer the living image of a man who is the opposite of what he appears to be. He is a walking illustration of the theme with which he opens the play: I am not what I am.

The first of these soliloquies occurs at the end of the First Act. The care of Desdemona has just been entrusted to Iago and he is left with Roderigo, whom he immediately instructs in the means of seducing her. Roderigo, gulled by his hopes and lust, goes out obediently to sell all his land. It is time for Iago to explain himself a little to the audience. Once again he asserts the basic fact: "I hate the Moor" and gives us a first pointer to the plot that is forming in his mind:

Let me see now.

To get his place, and to plume up my will

In the second soliloquy, Iago brings his plot into slightly sharper focus; he will abuse Cassio to the Moor and make the Moor thank him and reward him for 'making him egregiously an ass': but still the line of action is a little blurred:

The complete, explicit plot is reserved for the third' soliloquy:

For whiles this honest Fool

Plies Desdemona to repair his Fortune,

And she for him, pleads strongly to the Moor,

The remaining five soliloquies are signposts in the sense of giving valuable indications about Iago's plots. Their primary importance is not psychological : in them we find Iago giving practical shape to his thoughts. In one of them he reveals his plan of dropping Desdemona's handkerchief in Cassio's house, in the fullest confidence that the discovery of the handkerchief will be regarded by Othello as a strong confirmation of his suspicions. In another he announces that he is going to cause a rift between Othello and Cassio and bring about the latter's downfall. In still another soliloquy, we find him justifying the doom which he has in store for his victims, especially Cassio and Roderigo.

One of the soliloquies of Othello is tendered absolutely essential by the fact that he has just forfeited the reader's sympathy by striking at Desdemona in public and needs to rehabilitate himself. Dramatically, this soliloquy, with which the last scene starts, is not so essential, for Desdemona could have been, if Shakespeare so chose, shown as awake. On the other hand, the need for Othello to restore himself in the reader's estimation, to some extent at least, and the need to show that he thought of Desdemona's killing not as murder but as a piece of justice, was paramount, and only a soliloquy could achieve this. Othello has already decided what to do before he begins the soliloquy :

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul—

What underlies this soliloquy is the Othello's conviction that adultery deserves death, and he takes Desdemona's culpability for granted. His fault is that of foolish gullibility; which fully deserves the curse—"O fool ! fool ! fool !"

Othello's last soliloquy is intensely poetic and is great in its impact. The soliloquy imparts a beautiful pattern to the scene, with even some of the words repeated at the end. The soliloquy heralds an act of justice, committed on the wedding-bed of Desdemona, which becomes her death-bed in the beginning of the scene, and Othello's death-bed at the end of it. Both the killings are essential acts of justice, and each is preceded by a kiss. However, where the first deed is enacted in ignorance, the second is done in full tragic enlightenment. In Othello's first speech, which is a soliloquy, Othello says, kissing Desdemona—

One more, one more.

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,

And love thee after. One more, and that's the last.

Thus Othello's soliloquy also is an integral part of the scene in which it occurs. It comments on the action which is about to take place, expressing the agent's conscious motive and giving his view of its nature. It reveals a vast change in Othello's mood—the earlier fury has given place to a deadly quiet which is frightening. As Bradley observes, the man who utters this soliloquy does not seem to be the same man whom we have seen in Act IV. Othello's words tell us that he is going to rave Desdemona from herself, not in hate, but in honour and love. His anger has passed, and in its place there is now a, boundless sorrow. Indeed, without this soliloquy, Othello would look less of a tragic hero and more of a bloody murderer.

A soliloquy is spoken by one character alone on stage. It often shows a character reflecting on an issue in the play or helps the audience learn more about how the situation or plot is related to that given character. It enables an audience to become more involved by increasing their knowledge of a certain character. Sometimes an object is used to help express actions and expressions, to act as a dramatic device. Soliloquies are an integral part of most of William Shakespeare plays. Shakespeare used different soliloquies: to show a developing character, updating- or summarizing a scene and also to give us a deeper insight into the personality of a character or its feelings. The plays of William Shakespeare feature many soliloquies. The "To be or not to be" speech from Hamlet is probably the most famous one in English literature. Another famous soliloquy from one of William Shakespeare's play was from Othello by the antagonist, Iago. In Othello, William Shakespeare portrayed Iago as the only one who have the soliloquies throughout the drama. In Macbeth, we see soliloquies that help us understand a changing Macbeth, through the play. Shakespeare uses a number of soliloquies to show his changing feelings. In 'Twelfth Night' we can clearly see Viola's personality as a carefree but confident individual that she is, through reading one soliloquy of hers. We learn about different people's personalities through reading the soliloquies in Merchant of Venice.

A soliloquy is a device often used in drama whereby a character relates his or her thoughts and feelings without addressing any of the characters. It is presented by only one character who talks alone with the impression that other characters are not hearing it. But in real situation, the character talks loud enough that for the audiences to hear and this could make the audiences understand and enjoy the play better. Soliloquies can be said to be similar to monologues or asides. Soliloquies were frequently used in poetic drama.

William Shakespeare's Othello is a great example of how much a soliloquy becomes vital element in a play or drama.. These soliloquies serve many purposes for the playwright. They are intended to reveal the intentions of the antagonist, to explain the feelings of vengeance and grudge of Iago towards Othello, Iago's planning to topple Othello by using another character, Cassio, to tell the private or personal feelings of the character about other characters, to create the bond of understanding between the audiences and the characters, and to further the action of the play.