



Mimetic Rivalry and Violence in William Shakespeare's *Othello*

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Abstract

This study examines rivalry, mimesis and violence in William Shakespeare's play *Othello* through the lens of mimetic desire. It explores how the play articulates the dynamics of desire, imitation and rivalry and how these forces culminate in violence. The central focus of the article hinges on finding the interaction between desires, rivalry and violence in the play which not only illuminates the motivations and actions of the characters but also offers insights into broader human tendencies towards conflict. Drawing on the theoretical framework of mimetic desire, the study demonstrates that *Othello* functions as a powerful representation of mimetic rivalry, wherein characters model their desires on others, leading to escalating antagonism between the characters in the play. The analysis shows that mimetic desire drives the conflicts in the play and ultimately results in the sacrificial deaths of Desdemona and Othello. The study concludes that Shakespeare's play serves as a compelling testimony to the destructive potential of unchecked mimetic desire and rivalry.

Keywords: mimetic desire, violence, sacred, multitude, *Othello*

Introduction

William Shakespeare's *Othello* is one of his greatest tragedies ever produced. The play has received wide acclaim ever since it was staged in 1604. Shakespeare's *Othello* stands as one of the most intense dramatic explorations of desire, rivalry, and violence in early modern literature. While the play has been widely interpreted through lenses such as race, gender, jealousy, and power, its tragic force ultimately arises from the contagious nature of desire and the rivalries it generates. The relationships among the characters are not governed by autonomous motivations but are shaped through imitation, comparison, and competition, creating a volatile network of desires that steadily escalates into conflict. In this sense, *Othello* offers a compelling literary site for examining mimetic rivalry, a concept theorized by René Girard, which explains how desire is mediated by others and how such imitation produces antagonism and violence.

The play centers on Othello, a Moorish general serving in Venetian army, secretly marries Desdemona, a noblewoman of Venice. Their marriage becomes vulnerable to manipulation by Iago, who serves under Othello. In *Othello*, Othello sets the contest for rivalry promoting Michael Cassio, the accountant, as a lieutenant which Iago disapproves as he desires the same position. Besides, Rodrigo's passion for Desdemona turns into his ambition which brings him in contest with Othello. Brabantio, the senator, wishes to end his daughter's inter-racial marriage with Othello. In addition to this, Desdemona's decision of marrying Othello serves as her mutiny against her own evil body, the burning passion. Brabantio, her father, provides the evidence, "O treason of the blood!" (1.1.66) and verifies that her motion "blushed at herself" (1.3.96-97). Othello longs fidelity and chastity from his wife and the Duke of Venice has larger contest with the Turks, then Ottoman Empire. All these conflicting desires culminate into rivalry among the characters of the play which lead to the tragic murder of Desdemona and suicide of Othello afterwards. In short, the characters in *Othello* compete for power, position and self as well as for love, lust and sanctity. While the play is often discussed through the themes of jealousy and race, René Girard's theory of mimetic desire offers a deeper way to understand the forces that drive Othello's downfall. Girard argues that desire is not autonomous but imitative- we desire what others appear to desire. This creates rivalry because our model of desire becomes an obstacle too. In *Othello*, Iago acts as the mediator of Othello's desire, subtly suggesting that Cassio desires Desdemona.

Review of Literature

There have been numerous attempts to analyze the play from different perspectives. *Othello* involves the issue of nationalism, militarism, race and gender.¹ The play has been a goldmine for sociologists, anthropologists, naturalists, psychologists and many others because of the treasures it holds and the multiple vantage points it offers. Over the centuries, critics have returned to *Othello* because it not only depicts individual tragedy but also exposes the deeper social anxieties embedded within early modern Europe.

A.C. Bradley, in his lectures on *Shakespearean Tragedies*, consents, "conflict" as the "main cause of the painful tension" in *Othello*; it arises out of "sexual jealousy" that turns Othello's human nature into chaos, releasing "beast in man [Othello]" (Bradley, 1906, p.177). Bradley regards sexual jealousy as the key factor behind the conflict in the play, emphasizing the psychological descent that transforms Othello from a noble general into a violent and irrational husband.

Similarly, the critical engagement with *Othello* has long emphasized the centrality of its plot and narrative structure also. As Lloyd Davis argues in "The Plots of *Othello*: Narrative, Desire, Selfhood," responses to the play from the seventeenth century onward reveal a sustained

In *Othello: A Contextual History* (1994), Virginia Mason Vaughan argues that play deals about nationalism showing concern over threat from Ottoman Empire, the Turks/Muslims, about military and its role in society. He argues that Othello being adherent to professionalism becomes more vulnerable to Iago's plot, about race with exploration and exploitation of nonwhites; race was becoming a global concept during renaissance and about marital and sexual relations. See page 4- 8.

preoccupation with its plot as both structural design and motivating intrigue. Davis notes that narrative, in *Othello*, functions as a powerful force that shapes relationships, actions, and desires among characters. Davies concludes that Shakespeare's narrative can both construct and destabilize selfhood, ultimately directing desire toward tragic outcomes (Davis, 1999, p.20)

Similarly, Mohssine Nachit, in his article "Shakespeare's *Othello* and the Challenges of Multiculturalism", reads that *Othello* highlights the timeless dangers of ethnocentrism, prejudice, and fanaticism that still divide multicultural societies today (Nachit, 2016, p.105). He suggests that the play's tragic lessons should inspire intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding to prevent destructive conflicts. This perspective broadens the significance of *Othello*, framing it not only as a Renaissance tragedy but as an enduring social critique relevant to contemporary debates about identity and coexistence.

Likewise, Sunita B. Nimavat, in her analysis of women in Shakespeare's plays, regards the tragic murder of Desdemona by her husband Othello as a result of jealousy and the "cruelty of the patriarchal system" (Nimavat, 2017, p.150). Her reading highlights how Desdemona's fate exposes the vulnerability of women trapped within male-dominated structures that silence their voices and disregard their innocence.

Similarly, Cassidy Crosby reads *Othello* as a testimony of domestic violence. He contends, "Domestic violence is an obvious vehicle of tragedy . . . and the tragedy [in *Othello*] is ultimately carried out through domestic violence" (Crosby, 2021, p.46). Crosby shifts the focus from external forces to the intimate sphere, suggesting that the home becomes the site where patriarchal power, jealousy, and manipulation erupt most violently.

Furthermore, Kyle Gaydo examines the intersections of race, racism, and violence in *Othello*. He notes that Shakespeare's tragedy upholds the system of white power and its supremacy (Gaydo, 2021, p.11). His analysis foregrounds how Othello's racial difference is exploited to justify violence, mistrust, and ultimately his downfall.

Together, these diverse interpretations demonstrate the richness of *Othello* and its ability to engage with complex themes that continue to resonate across time and disciplines. While the existing scholarship explores *Othello* through lenses like nationalism, race (Gaydo), gender (Nimavat), domestic violence (Crossby), multiculturalism (Nachit) and psychological jealousy (Bradley), none of these readings frame the tragedy through René Girard's Mimetic Theory

Statement of the Problem

William Shakespeare's *Othello* has been extensively examined through diverse critical frameworks, including nationalism, race, gender, domestic violence, multiculturalism, and psychological jealousy. While these approaches have generated valuable insights into the play's social, cultural, and psychological dimensions, they largely overlook the dynamics of desire as a relational and imitative force that generates rivalry and violence. In particular, existing scholarship has not sufficiently engaged with *Othello* through the theoretical framework of René Girard's Mimetic Theory, which foregrounds mimetic desire, rivalry, and the scapegoat mechanism as central causes of conflict and violence. This absence constitutes a significant critical gap, as Girard's theory offers a coherent model for understanding how imitated desires escalate into rivalry and culminate in sacrificial violence. Addressing this gap, the present study applies Girard's

concepts of mimetic desire, violence, and scapegoating to *Othello* in order to reinterpret the tragic conflict and the sacrificial deaths of Desdemona and Othello as outcomes of mimetic rivalry. This study invokes René Girard's notion of mimetic desire, violence and scapegoat mechanism to read Shakespeare's *Othello* with the objective of examining how conflict in Shakespeare's *Othello* serves as the function of totality of desires that leads to sacrificial death of both Desdemona and Othello.

Methodology

This study adopts René Girard's mimetic theory as its primary analytical framework to interpret *Othello*. Girard's theory posits that human desire is imitative- individuals desire objects not autonomously but because others desire them. This imitation generates rivalry, which can escalate into conflict and culminate in scapegoating and violence. The methodology begins with a close textual reading of *Othello* to trace patterns of mimetic desire and rivalry among key characters, especially Othello, Iago, Cassio, and Desdemona. First, the analysis identifies scenes where desires appear to be mediated by another character's influence. The study examines how Iago, as a mediator, channels and manipulates Othello's desire for certainty and possession, transforming it into destructive jealousy. Dialogue, metaphor, and symbolic actions are scrutinized to reveal signs of mimetic doubling, rivalry, and escalating conflict. Second, character relationships are mapped to demonstrate the triangular structure central to Girard's theory: subject–mediator–object. Third, the analysis interprets the tragic outcome as a result of the mimetic crisis and scapegoating mechanism. Girard's notion that communities restore order by expelling or sacrificing a scapegoat is applied to Othello's killing of Desdemona and his own suicide as acts intended to purge the perceived disorder. Throughout, secondary literature on mimetic theory and Shakespearean tragedy is consulted to contextualize the findings. This methodological approach has aimed to illuminate how *Othello* dramatizes the universal dynamics of imitation, rivalry, and sacrificial violence, offering fresh insight into its enduring tragic power.

Result and Discussion

In *Othello*, William Shakespeare, through Iago, establishes desire as the foundation for the rivalry among the characters. Iago affirms, "Our bodies are gardens, to which our wills are gardeners" (1.3.320). Iago believes wills cultivate desires in bodies that spring up spontaneously, yet he addresses Othello as "my [Iago's] mediator" (1.1.14) and accepts him his master: "We cannot all be masters" (1.1.43). However, soon, it becomes clear that Iago despises Othello; he takes him as obstacle in his promotion. For Iago, Othello sets the context as his model and also assumes the role of an adversary on the road to his success. René Girard in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* maintains that birth of desire also gives the birth of jealousy, envy and hatred and ultimately to violence. Girard notes: "For hatred transfigures individuals no less than does desire and like desire sets us thirsting for human blood"(41). If inevitable consequences of desire are envy, jealousy, and hatred then the question of violence in Shakespeare's *Othello* is embedded in mimetic desires. Desire, claims René Girard in his widely acclaimed work *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, "is always spontaneous . . . It can always be portrayed by a simple straight line which joins subject and object"(2). Between subject and the object of desires, there are mediators, the models, the obstacles and the villains which

according to Girard form metaphorical "triangle" of desire (Ibid). Iago desires to gain the post of lieutenant from Cassio. Othello as a go between thwarts the zeal of Iago since he holds the power to take decision. Othello at once assumes the source for Iago's desire and at the same time becomes the object of hatred, the rival because he disapproves his ascent into the post. Harold Bloom observes that Iago has "fierce motive" (1) of rivalry after being passed over by Othello. Right above the line of desire between Iago the subject and the post as object of desire, which Cassio holds, Othello resides as an obstacle which forms the first metaphorical 'triangle' of desire in the play. Cassio also assumes the role of Iago's rival since he becomes the obstacle to Iago's promotion. Cassio comes in-between Iago and his desire forming the second metaphorical 'triangle' of desire in the play.

Furthermore, another triangular desire is formed between Rodrigo, Othello and Desdemona. Rodrigo as a subject desires Desdemona, the object of desire. Rodrigo wishes to marry Desdemona but fails since she elopes with Othello. Now, the passion of Rodrigo over Desdemona becomes his ambition. He fancies Othello as his rival and confesses to Iago, "I rather would have been his hangman" (1.1.52). Rodrigo envies what Othello possess, "What a full fortune does the thick lip [Othello] owe . . ." (1.1.64). In corroboration with Girard's notion of triangle of desire, Othello acts as a mediator of desire as a "model" who puts desires into the head of his imitator Rodrigo. Rodrigo considers himself a more descent candidate for Desdemona's love than 'a thick lipped' Negro. Othello as a Moor achieves the position of general out of his hard work and bravery. He wins the heart of Desdemona. He accepts, "She loved me for the dangers I had passed" (1.3.167). But a Moor marrying a white girl becomes a matter of contempt and unacceptability to Rodrigo and Iago. Iago expresses his racial hatred evoking sexual imagery when he tells Brabantio, "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe" (1.1.85-86). He confirms his jealous nature, as he confesses, "it is my nature's plague/ To spy into abuses, and of my jealousy" (3.3.146-147). Iago's sexual jealousy surfaces in his remark, "Your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs" (1.1.115-116). Rodrigo not only approves what Iago says but also persuades Brabantio to discover Othello and release Desdemona from his grip. The two rivals of Othello decide, "Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him" (1.3.363-364). In Girardian sense, desire is not which surfaces out of the dark cave of the unconscious, as Freud assumes², but something the "Other" "invokes" in the subject. ". . . A little desire," writes Girard, "is enough to arouse desire in the creature of vanity" (7). His creature of vanity, the *vaniteux* is a vain person who "cannot draw his desires from his own resources; he must borrow them from others" (6). Rodrigo, in Girardian vein, is a true *vaniteux* since his desire is relational; it is induced on him by beautiful Desdemona via Othello and further intensified by Iago, the catalyst. Rodrigo does what Iago incites him to. In this sense, desire in Rodrigo is neither resides in him nor in the object of desire, Desdemona. It is constituted by Othello and Iago. However, Rodrigo, Othello and Desdemona

² In their article "Awareness, desire, and false beliefs: Freud in the light of modern neuropsychology" (Cortex, 2007, Vol 43, No 8, 1083-1090) Oliver H. Turnbull and Mark Solms invoke Freud's view that most mental activity occurs outside conscious awareness and reassert his claim unconscious motivational and emotional factors as the forces that shape conscious mental life in the establishment of the relation between awareness, desire and false belief (1083-1090)

form another metaphorical triangle of desire with Othello on top both as a source and hindrance of Rodrigo's desire.

In this light, Desdemona is the most prized object of desire for Othello and Rodrigo. Othello as an Elizabethan husband expects fidelity and chastity from her. Unlike Othello, Rodrigo cannot express his desire for Desdemona, "What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond, but it is not in my virtue to amend it" (I.3. 317-318). Despite the sense that it is a matter of guilt to desire somebody's wife, Rodrigo acknowledges his inability to resist his passion for Desdemona. He knows, "It is silliness to live when to live is torment" (1.3.309), yet, he wishes to "drown myself [himself]" (1.3.309) loving Desdemona. Even Iago fails to put forth his repressed angst to Othello; proclaim his position for the lieutenant in place of Cassio. He concedes, "I will wear my heart upon my sleeve" (1.1.62). Living with unexpressed mimetic desires, the people in the world of *Othello* hatch conspiracy to one another. Girard believes that the distance between the imitator and the model in triangular desire determines the intensity of the rivalry between the imitator and the model. The mediator in the course of time becomes a "diabolical enemy" of the subject and he tries to "rob the subject of his most prized possessions; he obstinately thwarts his most legitimate ambitions" (11). In the play, longing of Iago and passion of Rodrigo are internally mediated; therefore, there exists no gap/distance between the rivals. This makes the chances of direct confrontation between the subject and the model. The imitator, unlike externally mediated desire where he "proclaims the true nature of his desire", consciously "hides them [his desires]" (10). Rodrigo never reveals his desire to his model instead he hides them and expects them to be fulfilled with the assistance of Iago.

Unlike the desires of Iago and Rodrigo discussed above, desires of Othello towards Desdemona; of Senator Brabantio towards his daughter's marriage and of the Duke of Venice are not mediated desires. Instead, they form the spontaneous or linear desires. Hence, they bear no chances of confrontation because there exists no "third person" (21), as Girard believes, between the subject and the object of desire. Othello as a warrior, noble servant of Venice, serves the state of Venice. He believes that he is rewarded by Desdemona for his hard work, "She gave me for my pains a world of kisses" (1.3.159). And Desdemona accepts in front of the Duke: "My heart's subdued/ Even to the very quality of my lord" (1.3.251-252). However, Janette Dillon perceives that Othello is not the "welcome son in law for a Venetian Senator" (78). Brabantio expresses the sadness over the decision of her daughter, "O unhappy girl/ With the Moor . . ." (1.1.161-162). He declares, "She is abused, stol'n . . . and corrupted/ By spells and medicines" (1.3.61-62). Othello is a Moor, an outsider for the Venetians. In addition to this, Desdemona's transgression and Othello's passing over of Iago in promotion establish the fertile ground for "envy, jealousy, and impotent hatred" (Girard 41) making them potential sacrificial victims, the scapegoats.

Having established the relation between mimetic desire and rivalry, William Shakespeare in *Othello* presents both subjective and objective violence.³ Othello as an outsider suffers symbolic

³ Slavoj Zizek in *Violence: Six Sideways reflections* forwards two kinds of violence-subjective violence and objective violence. According to him, Subjective violence is visible and performed by identifiable subject whereas objective violence is invisible. He identifies two kinds of objective violence-symbolic and systematic violence. The first one is associated with language whereas the second one is linked with ideology (1-2)

and systemic violence. Although Othello is a perpetrator of direct violence on Desdemona, he is also sufferer of indirect violence i.e. racial discrimination. This could be taken as one of the reasons that lead Othello to become a murderer of his beloved. Othello in Shakespeare's play is a Moor, a Negro, an outsider. Despite his loyalty and service to the state of Venice, Othello is not integrated to English community. Othello, thinks Brabantio, is a "foul thief" who practiced "magic" to "enchant" his daughter Desdemona (1.2.60-64). He orders to "call up all my [White] people" (1.1.139) against a single black man. Rodrigo regards him "a wheeling stranger" (1.1.134) and "a lascivious Moor" (1.1.124). Iago thinks, "These Moors are changeable in their wills" (1.1.344). Even Othello affirms his inferiority, foreignness and uncultivated manner when he asserts: "I do confess the vices of my blood" (1.3.124) and acknowledges:

Haply for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years (3.3. 263-264)

Othello makes a crucial remark on his deprivation as a foreigner. This suggests the systemic violence he undergoes under white supremacy that declines blacks or minorities from their status and rights and imposes discriminations. It is firmly set in Othello's psyche that he belongs to the inferior race and lacks polished and cultivated language and manners of "chamberers." Besides, Othello suffers what Slavoj Zizek calls a "symbolic" violence embodied in language (1). Laurence Lerner calls Othello "the story of a barbarian who (the pity of it) relapses" and concludes that Shakespeare "suffered from colour prejudice" (quoted in Berry 316). Othello is not only mocked for his race but also projected with negatively charged words- foul, filthy, devil, savage, passionate- that project him as an ugly, immoral, irrational and evil person. Rene Girard in his seminal work *Violence and Sacred* sees such deprivation and marginalization resulting to sacrificial ending. Girard concedes, "Exterior or marginal individuals, incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds that link the rest of the inhabitants" as the possible pharmakos or scapegoat available immediate at hand for the community (12). Thus, from the very onset of the play, Othello also holds the possibility of becoming a "future victim" (Ibid); someone Iago and Rodrigo wish to 'sink' their 'teeth into'.

Taking writing as a representation of contemporary time, then, was Shakespeare affirming his Elizabethan reader that punishment to Desdemona then to Othello would safeguard the values of contemporary Elizabethan society and establish the order? The answer to my question calls for understanding the attitudes of Elizabethan people towards inter racial marriages and analysis of the testimonies Shakespeare presents in *Othello*. Girard takes purpose of the sacrifice as the restoration of "harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric" (8). In this regard, Mohammad Allibaih argues, "The Moor's interracial marriage potentially guarantees a better integration in the Venetian society for an outsider" (49). He further notes, "Marriage was meant to preserve the order and hierarchy in rigidly and highly stratified societies, both the Venetian and English ones" (51). Elizabethan society was highly stratified and social practices like marriage was supposed to maintain the hierarchies. The marriage between Othello and Desdemona was against the values of Elizabethan society. Conversely, Edward Berry identifies Othello as an alienated character as he takes Shakespeare's protagonist as "complicated but individualized" who are set apart from

Venetian society in almost every respect(316). The arguments of Allibaih and Berry do not corroborate with each other. Also, in *Othello*, the evidence that Desdemona elopes with Othello without her father Brabantio's knowledge, "O heaven! How got she out?" (1.1.167) and "O, she deceives me" (1.1.163), testifies that interracial marriage was unacceptable to the contemporary society. For Rodrigo, the marriage was a revolt against the values of the society:

Your daughter – if you have not given her leave,
I say again – hath made a gross revolt,
Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and everywhere. (1.1. 131-135)

Rodrigo holds the opinion that Desdemona's elopement with Othello is her mutiny against the values of the society. It is supposed to destabilize the order in society. Iago takes it further by designating a non- human status to Othello and Desdemona, "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram/ Is tupping your white ewe" (1.1.85-86). The image of ram and ewe suggests innocence and the sacrificial animal god chooses for men in biblical text. Except the Duke's consoling words that his "son-in-law is far more fair than black" (1.3.291) no one supports the union. And for the Duke, he has reasons to do so because Othello is about to set for Cyprus to fight the Turks. How could the Duke betray his ablest warrior general? But to others, Othello's interracial marriage sparks internal violence- rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels within the Shakespearean community. Iago's narrative of false love scene hurts the ego of Othello. Now, his love towards Desdemona is replaced by hatred. Iago testifies the decline, "The Moor already changes with my poiso" (3.3.324). Besides, it brings his racial inferiority into the surface. Othello, the noble warrior, concedes:

My blood begins my safer guides to rule
And passion, having my best judgment collied,
Assaysn to lead the way. (2.3.188-191)

Although Shakespeare lends Othello 'passion' to justify his downfall and murder of Desdemona, the deep underlying patriarchal and racial issues that treated both women and the blacks as inferior or the "other" seems to be the latent reason behind Othello's murder of Desdemona and suicide of himself afterwards. This, Iago testifies, ". . . the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions" (1.3.327-329). Iago accuses "blood", the origin for the outcomes of every action one does. Once Othello falls the victim of overwhelming passion, he fails to distinguish good from the bad; he loses rationality, logic and capacity of verifying the false accusation of Iago on Desdemona. Desdemona accuses Othello, "Some bloody passion shakes your very frame" (5.2.44). Iago's fabricated story of Desdemona's infidelity hurts the male ego of Othello. Filled with hatred towards Desdemona, he turns aggressive and violent. Othello concedes, "She shall not live /No, my heart is turned to stone" (4.1.175). Othello declares cold blooded murder of Desdemona, "I will chop her into messes. Cuckold me?" (4.1.192). Iago adds to his fury,"Strangle her in her bed . . . bed she hath contaminated" (4.1.97-98). In the last scene, Othello tells his intension of killing Desdemona to her. Desdemona fears Othello, "I fear you . . . you are fatal . . . your eyes roll so" (5.2.37-38). Othello stabs her in her

own bed. And later on kills himself. Killing of Desdemona overshadows all the brawls and rivalries in the play since it forms the climax of the action.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Othello* powerfully illustrates how mimetic desire and rivalry shape human conflict and tragedy. Othello, as the only black character, embodies both the outsider and the self-made hero who strives to integrate into a society that continues to view him as the “other.” His marriage to Desdemona challenges the deep-seated cultural and racial norms of Elizabethan society, provoking envy, anxiety, and resentment among those who cannot accept their union. Yet his downfall is not merely the result of racial prejudice or personal flaws alone, but of desires that are imitated, manipulated, and ultimately weaponized. Through Iago’s cunning strategies, Othello’s longing for love, honor, belonging, and certainty becomes entangled in a web of rivalry. Desdemona is transformed from a loving partner into the central object through which mimetic tensions unfold, making her innocence tragically irrelevant. Iago’s role as mediator fuels Othello’s suspicion of Cassio as a rival, converting marital love into obsessive jealousy and moral confusion. As Othello increasingly internalizes Iago’s suggestions, his sense of identity becomes unstable, fragmented, and driven by fear of dishonor. The brutal murder of Desdemona, though impossible to justify by logic or morality, stands as the tragic culmination of escalating mimetic pressures—pressures that expose how fragile human relationships become when desire is rooted in imitation rather than understanding. Through this trajectory, Shakespeare reveals the destructive power of manipulated desire and highlights how easily trust, love, and reason can collapse under the weight of rivalry. In this sense, the play becomes a powerful dramatization of mimetic desire itself: individuals lose control over their emotions because those emotions no longer originate within them but are shaped by a deceptive mediator. Othello does not desire truth, certainty, or even Desdemona freely; he desires what Iago leads him to desire. The tragedy emerges not from inherent evil but from the human vulnerability to imitate the fears and suspicions of others. Thus, *Othello* ultimately suggests that when desire is mimetic—borrowed, distorted, and redirected—it transforms love into violence and identity into ruin.

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