

Shakespeare on Social Media

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(Note from Professor Miller: For this assignment, students examined Shakespeare's Othello by tracing the individual journeys of the central characters as they move through the play. As part of the project, students imagined that the characters had access to social media, and determined which platforms each character would be most inclined to use. Students then created an online presence -- for the characters.)

Imagine if William Shakespeare's *Othello* had characters possessing social media. Iago, a cunning man, would probably use Tumblr as his journal: he would never write down any of his plans on a physical piece of paper, or he would risk the book being discovered by the other characters. However, his primary form of social media would be Twitter. Iago would be able to convey his schemes to Roderigo via Twitter, all the while playing his part, like a puppeteer controlling the marionettes in the palm of his hand.

On the other hand, Othello and Desdemona would, in all probability, use Skype and Facebook, respectively. These two characters were a part of a military family, with Othello being a popular general and Desdemona being his civilian spouse. If we take modern-day military families as an example, we would find that Othello, being in an active combat scenario, would never have the time to waste on social media platforms. Having said that, I think Othello would use Skype when the opportunity presented itself to see his wife in person, even if through a plastic screen. Through Skype, he could show her the environment, his current conditions, and his well-being. Despite being a general, Othello still ran the risk of being slain for being the commander of the Venetian army. Just from seeing his wife's face, hearing her voice, and being reminded of the home he had left behind, Othello would be inspired to great lengths to return to the person he profoundly loved. Additionally, he would also get to spend time telling his tales to his beloved wife, which were the main reason she fell for him in the first place. When Othello was finished with his romantic Skype session with Desdemona, he would use the social media platform with his men and trusted friends as well.

Desdemona's preference for Facebook comes from the fact that, unlike her husband, she may have had much more time to use this social media platform. After completing her daily rituals and Skype sessions, Desdemona would use Facebook to retell Othello's adventures. Once finished, she would have the option to show the stories to close friends, and possibly make them jealous of her marriage to such a great man. Furthermore, she could post her current status, and follow a "Venetian Army" Facebook groups.

Following his alliance with Roderigo, Iago would friend him on Twitter and set up a private chat with him. Iago tweets, "This shalt beest our primary source of communication. I'll alloweth thee knoweth if 't be true i needeth thy help. I'll eke alloweth thee knoweth what i has't done to Othello" and explains that "If 't be true thee ev'r receiveth hath caught, fordid this" to Roderigo. Sometime later, Iago tweets at his Twitter buddy, informing him that "Cassio, Desdemona and Othello art within the palm of mine own handeth. Waiteth a few did bite m're mine own cousin, ev'rything is proceeding as i has't did plan. The claws shall nev'r knoweth what shall hitteth those folk". Iago then persuades the recently promoted lieutenant Cassio to drink some alcohol, which results in his fall from grace and his rank being stripped from him. Using this momentum, Iago capitalizes on it, directing Cassio towards Desdemona. Shortly thereafter, he gets Othello on board, telling the Moor that his wife has been dishonest with him. Alas, all good things for Iago must come to an end. His last tweet with Roderigo: "Fucking trait'r. If 't be true thee gaveth me m're timeth, i wouldst has't given thee desdemona by anon, but thee just hadst to beest the impatient typeth of guy. I'll meeteth thee in hell," before deleting his Twitter account out of rage. His last thoughts would how everything was in the palm of his hand and it was exceedingly executed, but now it was all ruined.

After his conversation with Brabantio, Desdemona, and the Venetian senate, Othello would immediately get on a handheld device and search to see if there is any internet access in the area. Finding reception, he launches Skype and instantly calls his parents. It would be one of the routine things he would be asked to do, since his parents do not physically see their son as much anymore. Othello might be a great commander, but they are still worried sick about him, constantly wondering if he has met his end on the battlefield. It is always when they see his smiling face that they know he is still alive and well. They discuss the usual topics, such as where Othello was and if he has been taking good care of himself these past few months. The conversation only changes when they speak about his love life. They know how crazily in love their son was with Desdemona, as he would always speak

about her whenever the opportunity presented itself. This time around, Othello speaks about the confrontation that he had earlier with his father-in-law, and how he grew to become more attached to Desdemona after she defended him against her own father. Even though Brabantio has given him unsettling advice concerning Desdemona's loyalty, Othello's parents state that marriage has its own hurdles and he should concentrate on making his wife happy. Later, Othello launches Skype and calls his longtime friend and subordinate, Iago. Instead of giving the guidance that Othello wishes to hear, Iago responds in a cold but in an extremely blunt fashion, stating that Cassio and Desdemona were probably having a relationship behind Othello's back. Othello enlists Iago's assistance to get back at both Cassio and Desdemona, ends the Skype call, and storms off into the night. At a much later time, Othello launches Skype, perhaps for the final time, and contacts his parents to discuss what has been happening. Straightaway, his parents realize that their son is distraught, calling Desdemona a whore, blaming Cassio for his wife's unfaithfulness, and recruiting Iago. Frightened by their son's change, they attempt to convince their son to back away from this dark path. Regrettably, it falls on deaf ears. Filled with nothing but rage and jealousy, Othello cuts the Skype call. Later that night, he goes to where Desdemona slept and moved to suffocate her, forever sealing his fate.

It was a typical day for Desdemona. Being the wife of a distinguished general meant that she did not get the chance to see her husband often, but that was a worthy sacrifice. As such, she regularly goes on Facebook whenever she is finished with her house chores and whatever business she needed to attend. Just recently, she had the extraordinary fortune of seeing her husband and had the honor of defending him against her own father. Afterward, Desdemona updated her Facebook status to "I hath met mine own husband the present day and combated 'gainst mine own fath'r f'r that gent. T'wast w'rth it, nay questions hath asked. At which hour I did see that gent, I hath fallen in love with that gent all ov'r again." At the conclusion of the handkerchief fiasco, Desdemona promptly goes on Facebook and updates her status: "I'm in earnest confused. Wherefore hast Othello lash'd out at me in such a mann'r? Though tis partially mine own fault f'r not knowing wh're the handk'rchief is, that gent hadst nay right to treateth me in such a way!" Before her untimely death, somehow she updates her Facebook status for the very last time. She posts that "I still loveth thee othello. Nay matt'r how harsh thee treateth me those past few days, i still seeth within thee the sir yond i hath fallen in loveth with all those years ago. I just desire with this, whatev'r sins i may has't embrac'd myself to earneth thy ire, is finally remedi'd. Farewell, mine own loveth and godspeed."

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