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## Betrayal Theme In Othello And Medea

Othello and Medea are two stories from different eras tied together by similar intertwining themes of death, betrayal, exile, and love. In both plays, the main characters, Medea and Othello, experience all of these. The betrayal felt by both came from the people they were both closest to. Othello was closest with his wife, Desdemona, and Medea with her husband, Jason. Another issue that pervades in the play is love, which is presented as strong in the beginning but fades away by the middle of each play. In Medea, Medea is exiled by everyone in every city around her, but the opposite is true for Othello, the main character who is not exiled but dies. Death is a given theme for both plays as there is at least a person who is murdered in both story plots at the end. Although Medea and Othello were written in two different eras hundreds of years apart, both share almost identical story lines and themes. While all of these themes are present in the two story lines, both have differences and similarities for each theme.

The people closest to the main characters in Othello and Medea die at the hands of the person they love the most. Othello kills his wife, Desdemona, whom he just married all due to the fear and lies put into his head by his closest advisor, Iago. She was the only person he trusted and told everything to. Othello's perception of her changed as the play went on, first being head over heels in love as if she could never do anything wrong, then turning into she's cheater, how dare she do this to not only her reputation, but to Othello's. Eventually leading to Desdemona's death by getting smothered by the hands of her husband. Her death symbolizes the ending of not only her life but the marriage ending, "she lies dead on the same bedding she uses on her wedding night"(Fernandez-Corugedo 85). In comparison Medea murders her children, Creon (the king), and Glauce (the princess) in order to get back at her husband, Jason, for abandoning her and their children. Medea kills more people in contrast to Othello with just his wife. She kills her children because she has to go into exile somewhere else far away and she won't get to see her kids. They would have to stay in Corinth due to them being citizens there and their father wanting them to be raised in the castle with his new wife. She kills them in order to not miss any milestones they would have such as weddings or parties and she is not able to see or attend any of them. Medea is vengeful towards Jason that she even goes as far as killing his new wife, Glauce, by giving her a poisoned dress so he can't have someone to love or have a way to move up in the world. And for good measure she kills the king, Creon, in order for Jason not to have any ties to the royals at all. Although she is vengeful her anger does not cancel out her ability to plan (Torrance 288). As the story unfolds we see that Medea is skilled at making sure she enflicks as much hurt on Jason as possible. She turns into a cold hearted person who only cares about making Jason hurt as much as he hurt her. Othello and Medea by the end of their stories are left with nothing as both accomplish their vengeful missions to correct the wrongs done to them.

Betrayal is often a common theme amongst plays or stories, Othello and Medea are no exceptions. The type of betrayal differs from each story. Sexual betrayal happens in Othello compared to emotional betrayal in Medea. In the instance of Othello the sexual betrayal stems from Iago planting thoughts of Desdemona and Cassio sneaking behind Othello's back to be together. While Iago's accusation of this is not true, Othello loves Desdemona so much that it pushes him over the edge into thinking about all the scenarios that could have happened between Cassio and His wife. The basis of Iago's plan is to get Othello to imagine Cassio in his

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(Othello's) place (Snow 394) to ensure he maximizes the amount of revenge Othello will want to get. The strategy Iago set in motion for his plan works on Othello as he starts to imagine Cassio and Desdemona making love and cheating. All this thinking of his wife in that way with his right hand man leads him to killing his wife to stop her from committing any other adultery. Before he kills Desdemona he hints to her that she's going to die that night, and saying, "... I would not kill thy unprepared spirit..." (Shakespeare 5.2.237) him saying that shows his last bit of mercy towards Desdemona and some of the morals/standards he has for himself. He ultimately ends up smothering her to death after knowing she has prayed. On the opposite end of betrayal we have the story of Medea, a woman who was left by her husband for another woman. Her experience of betrayal was emotional instead of sexual. Jason, her used-to-be husband left her for Glauce, the princess Corinth, out of the blue one day. Not only did he leave his wife, but he left his two little boys at home with her. This pushes Medea to see Jason in a completely different light, she now sees him as a betrayer to her family. She wants to cause as much hurt on him as possible without killing him. This is a stark contrast to Othello in how she wants him to suffer a fate worse than death. By killing every person he loves she not only gets her revenge she's been wanting on him, but tells Jason that she "... will not..." (Euripides 759) let Jason get to touch or say goodbye to his dead sons for a final time. Giving him the ultimate punishment for his betrayal of not only her, but his children as well. Similarly Othello and Medea are left with nothing at the end of their stories, no loved ones as both kill them to fix the betrayals they felt by Desdemona and Jason.

## Works Cited

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