

Desdemona: a martyr or a fool

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So many things were said about this lady in Shakespeare's play Othello, but still a question tickles our consciousness: who is Desdemona? Desdemona is a character in the play Othello written by William Shakespeare in the year 1601 – 1604. In the play, Desdemona was described as a Venetian woman, a daughter of a Venetian senator. She disappointed many including her father when she escaped with Othello, a black man who was senior Desdemona (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, n. d.).

Later, her husband Othello joined the army and thus left her alone in their house. Due to this Desdemona missed her husband so much and expressed the sexual desire to her husband so strongly that she wanted to go with the army just to be with him. In his return, Othello suspected that Desdemona cheated on him. Here, we can see that she is being physically and verbally abused. She was even called a whore by her husband in public which is extremely humiliating.

Desdemona died in the last scene of the play due to the abuses of her husband. At the beginning of the story, we can see that Desdemona is a lady with strong disposition and has a “ she gets what she wants” personality. This is evident in her eloping activity with Othello despite the fact that her father disagreed strongly about Othello becoming her husband and the social pressures she had that time. I believe, she was a woman who knew what she wanted and was determined to get it. This is evident in her lines, “ I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband, and so much duty as my mother show'dTo you, preferring you before her father, so much I challenge that I may profess due to the Moor my lord” (Clark & Wright, 1979). Although

Desdemona was this type of woman, she reflected a daughter with high respect of her father.

Her line “ My noble father, I do perceive here a divided duty” shows that she was indeed a woman with grace and proper bearing. She knew how to respect her parent (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, n. d.). We can also say that Desdemona is a woman of brevity and wanted actions.

It can be recalled that Desdemona was mesmerized by Othello’s stories about actions, wars and adventures. These made Desdemona unafraid of the idea of going to Cyprus to join Othello in the war. There were also parts of the play where Desdemona was submissive to her husband. Her lines in her room before she died illustrate it clearly. When Emilia asked her, “ O, who hath done this deed?”, Desdemona answered on her dying breath, “ Nobody; I myself. Farewell: Commend me to my kind lord: O, farewell”.

Instead of revealing to Emilia that Othello had tried to kill her, she managed to hide the truth leaving her husband free from his responsibility due to his actions. Another scene that shows the submissiveness of Desdemona was in Act IV scene I; when Othello slapped her, she just said in teary eyes, “ I have not deserve this” instead of screaming or fighting back Othello (Sparknotes. com, n. d.).

The question that tickles my mind now is: what makes Desdemona submissive? Was it love? Yes. It could be love. It could be that Desdemona was so madly in love with Othello that she could live without him even if living with him was like a hell on earth. We see that there are two opposing traits that Desdemona showed in the play: being a fighter, adventurous and <https://assignbuster.com/desdemona-a-martyr-or-a-fool/>

being submissive. It can be concluded that Desdemona's submissiveness is due to love or due to her strong determination, as she always had to prove to the father that her choice of marriage was right.

She wants to protect the wholeness of their marital relationship. Thus, it can be concluded that there are two possible motivating factors on why Desdemona stayed with Othello despite the abuses – love or determination to prove that her choice is right. Further, the play also depicts that Desdemona betrayed Othello. It can be seen in Act III scene iii that she persuaded Othello to forgive Cassio, but this depiction of Desdemona's alleged mischievousness is so insignificant to ponder upon. In comparison to today's women, ladies in 16th century were of big difference. As depicted in the play, women of that time of history were submissive.

They saw themselves completely under their husbands' sleeves. They submitted allegiance and loyalty to one man and stayed no matter what happens. And Desdemona is of no exception. Now let us answer the question I posed at the beginning of this essay: who is Desdemona? Desdemona is a representation of every woman in every society. She bears the complexity of being a woman. Mistress is brave, ready to squabble for her man, but she is weak if she is against her man.

Desdemona's tears and crying moments in the play show this as well as her courage to face her father to protect the marriage against his fury.

Desdemona is a woman who just fell in love with a wrong guy. Just like many women today all around the globe. Many women were victims of domestic violence, and many were bounded by their culture oppressing their freedom

to do things they want, just like Desdemona. Indeed, she is a picture of a woman in any part of this globe, in any time of history.

She is a simply a woman.