

Shakespeare

[Literature](#), [Character](#)



In Shakespeare's work there are typically three reoccurring themes throughout his stories. Those themes are love, betrayal and jealousy. All of these themes occur in Othello. The most dominant, however, is jealousy which is the theme I will focus on in this essay. Jealousy, out of all the themes can be identified from the very beginning of the story until the end. Jealousy first arises when Roderigo is envious of Othello because he wishes to be with Desdemona, and at the end of the play, when Othello is furious with envy because he believes Cassio and Desdemona have been engaging in an affair. One character in particular seems to be at the forefront of all bad that happens in Othello, which is Iago. As the story unfolds he creates more lies and implements misleading situations that see people's life change. He is desperately jealous of Cassio and hates Othello, and he targets these two characters especially. His jealousy is fueled from the fact that Cassio was picked as lieutenant over him. The decision was made by Othello. Another trait that makes Iago stand out as a villain in the piece is his selfish attitude towards just about everyone. He goes out of his way to try and make everyone feel as bad as he does; his goal is to make everyone equally as jealous which he succeeds in doing to a degree. Through manipulation and betrayal he succeeds by getting revenge on Othello. From the outset it is obvious that Iago is a villain in the piece. Roderigo is madly in love with Desdemona and he pays Iago to try and prize her away from Othello. Not only do these actions prove he is the villain, but he describes his plot to exploit Othello as a thief by saying that Othello has stolen Desdemona's heart through means of witchcraft. Iago encourages Roderigo to get in contact with Desdemona's father, Brabantio. He tells Roderigo, " Call up her

father, Rouse him...poison his delights...do, with like timorous accent and dire yell, " (I. i. 64-65, 72). Although it would appear that Iago has genuine concern for Roderigo in his quest to prize away Desdemona, his mind is only focused on is the damage and distress that this could all have on Othello. His plot is to get Brabantio to confront Othello over his false allegations regarding stealing his daughter's heart through witchcraft. This proves he is a liar, betrayer and trouble maker early in the story. Iago has a tendency to say the right things at the right time in order for his plots to be so effective. He often produces something that can avoid confrontation arising. Haim Omer and Marcello Da Verona in their article " Doctor Iago's treatment of Othello" deliver an example of Iago's manipulation when he and Roderigo confront Brabantio about his daughter. Brabantio does not believe what the two say about Desdemona, calling it absurd, he reacts with fury to the fact he has been awoken in the middle of the night to this story. Omer and de Verona recognize that Roderigo immediately starts to explain and justify his accusations, which only fuels Brabantio's raging mood even more. Iago, on the other hand, responds by actually complimenting Brabantio (Omer, 1991). Brabantio yells, " Thou art a villain" to which Iago responds, " You are a senator" (I. i. 115-116). Brabantio is surprised by the comment and it causes him to re-think the situation, this eases his anger and subsequently he beliefs the two storytellers, the story then becomes much more believable when Brabantio discovers Desdemona is missing from her bed chamber (Omer, 1991). Iago is also very clever when it comes to the timing of these; his timing is probably something that isn't recognized by some people. Without the ability to time some of the things he says, he probably would

have been caught out and seen for what he really is, a manipulative liar. He implements this trait exceptionally with Roderigo and Othello. Marcia Macaulay in her article “ When Chaos Is Come Again: Narrative and Narrative Analysis in Othello” says that “(Iago) commences with an imperative, follows with a question in which he answers himself, and ends with a bold assertion” (Macauley, 2005). This exceptional timing he uses is apparent when he is speaking to Roderigo regarding Desdemona’s love for Othello. “ Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies. To love him still for prating? Let not thy discreet heart think it. Her eye must be fed” (II. i. 230-234). He is labeling Othello as a liar and that Desdemona believes these lies that Othello is feeding her. He is trying to install belief into Roderigo that he can come between Othello and Desdemona. Like in act 1 scene 1, Iago, who isn’t actually interested in Roderigo’s feelings for Desdemona, Iago is trying to plot this to get one over Othello. That is his only focus throughout the whole of the story. Initially, Desdemona isn’t a threat to Iago. She is referred to a lot by him as he thinks her and Othello are engaging in a suspicious relationship together. However, this drastically changes. Desdemona asks Iago about his thought and feelings towards women and how he portrays them over all. Karl Zender summarizes this point perfectly in his article “ The Humiliation of Iago”. “ In posing her challenges, Desdemona places Iago in a situation...of being required to express affection at someone else’s request” (Zender, 1994). In his miserable attempt at answering this question his hatred for her grows vastly. I believe that this was a factor that only fueled his ambition to try and manipulate Desdemona’s relationship with Othello. He uses her to cause

Othello's raging mood and intense jealousy. Inevitably this causes Desdemona's death through manipulation throughout the piece. In conclusion, it's safe to say Iago is a manipulative, troublemaking liar. He plots the downfall of so many people through the jealousy that is burning inside of him. He acts in a selfish manner in this sense, he only does this people can feel the way he does. This causes the death of many people and then the demise of himself. Works Cited Omer, Haim, and Marcello Da Verona. " Doctor Iago's Treatment Of Othello." *American Journal Of Psychotherapy* 45. 1 (1991): 99. Academic Search Complete. Web. 2 Dec. 2012. Macaulay, Marcia. " When Chaos Is Come Again: Narrative And Narrative Analysis In Othello." *Style* 39. 3 (2005): 259-276. Academic Search Complete. Web. 2 Dec. 2012. Zender, Karl F. " The Humiliation Of Iago." *Studies In English Literature (Rice)* 34. 2 (1994): 323. Academic Search Complete. Web. 2 Dec. 2012.