

Othello victims speech (desdemona)

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



Thank you for that warm welcome. I am honored to be invited here to this seminar on 'interpretations of Shakespeare's characters'. EMILIA: "O, who hath done this deed?" DESDEMONA: "Nobody; I myself. Farewell." The short scripted speech and claim of guilt symbolize the loss of strength in Desdemona's final words as she dies. This is just the first example of many that prove that the statement 'Victims are actually the makers of their own demise' is true in relation to that of the character Desdemona in the play Othello. Specifically Desdemona's flaws, her betrayal, her manipulation and denying her initial instinct can be seen in correspondence to textual evidence from the play as well as Oliver Parker's 1995 film. Plays are meant to be seen, preformed and interpreted, so how is Desdemona truly presented? Dictionary. com defines a victim as 'a person who is deceived or cheated, as by their own emotions or ignorance or even by the dishonesty of others' and demise is defined as 'failure or termination' by the english dictionary. By these definitions we can conclude that Desdemona is a victim, and that her demise does happen. But is she the maker of her own demise? Othello, is a tragedy. Much like many of Shakespeare's plays, the tragedy is seen by the characters loss of potential greatness through their flaws and decisions. Critic G. Wilson Knight believes that Desdemona's potential for greatness were her qualities that contained her innocence and simplicity. However they then became her flaws and the culmination of them overpower her. She becomes fickle and immature and therefore naive in her decisions. Knight wrote that we first see this character change in her decision to elope with Othello at the beginning of the play. According to Knight she willingly enters the 'unknown seas of marriage with a mystery of man'. DESDEMONA:

"It yet hath felt no age, nor known no sorrow", this quote just shows how inexperienced and gullible Desdemona was. Desdemona's deceitful side is shown early when she betrays her father, swearing her allegiance to Othello. BRABANTIO: "O treason of the blood!" DESDEMONA: "So much I challenge that I may profess/ Due to the Moor my lord". This quote shows her change of allegiance and her declaration, but out of what? Most would say love, critic Jan Kott would say otherwise. Kott's view is reinforced by Kott's belief that Desdemona was sexually obsessed and that she married Othello out of lust and not love. In the Parker film various techniques have been used to accentuate Desdemona's flaws. The cover of the film itself displays a story of lust rather than love as well as the costuming which shows Desdemona in a provocative red dress. This intertextual reference to the scarlet woman corroborates Kott's belief that Desdemona was a woman who acted on her naive feelings of lust rather than her claims of love. Desdemona's ability to manipulate is seen in regards to Cassio when she says DESDEMONA: "Tell him I have moved/ my lord on his behalf" providing false hope to Cassio that his relationship with Othello is repaired. When Iago manipulates those around him in the play many people challenge his ways, yet no one questions Desdemona. While her intentions may have been noble, the way she conducted herself added to her eventual downfall. A greater example of her manipulation is when she states DESDEMONA: "It is not lost, but what and if it were?" to Othello, lying about the lost handkerchief as well as acting to see how her husband may react. This is a display of the theme appearance vs. reality as she shows her fake face to Othello. This also led to his doubt later on in the play, if he could not trust her then why should he

trust her now? In Act 2 DESDEMONA says: " O, most lame and impotent conclusion! Do not learn of him, Emilia, thought he be thy husband. " In this she is telling Emilia to be careful with Iago as she believes there is something about him that cannot be trusted. But, by this comes the question, if Desdemona is able to see Iago's flaws in Act 2 why does she later believe them herself? Iago tells her to pursue the case with Cassio and she complies. We see this in Act 3 as Desdemona exasperates Othello by persisting to talk about Cassio. Her repeated comments give Othello the grounds to believe what Iago has been telling him about the relationship between Desdemona and Cassio. DESDEMONA: " I have been talking with a suitor here,/ A man that languishes in your displeasure. " This quote is an example of her provocation as well as her attempt to manipulate Cassio and Othello. Had she taken the time to think by herself or talked to those she claimed to trust with all her heart, like Othello her husband, her demise may have been avoided. The Parker interpretation agrees with this as throughout most of the film we only see fleeting moments of lust between Desdemona and Othello and no real moments of deep conversation. Desdemona's behavior shown in the Parker production is erotic. She is shown talking to Cassio very closely and intimately, whispering in his ear while she waits for her husband to return from war. This scene is closely followed by a clip of a red sky symbolizing lust, blood, and doom. Foreshadowing that Desdemona's moments with Cassio and her decisions in regards to him will ultimately contribute to her downfall. The way she acts in front of everybody, with her husband and with Cassio are very similar. This shows how she has the ability to influence those around her. Showing her aptitude, and painting her as the

maker of her own demise. In conclusion the culmination of all the aspects that make up the character Desdemona lead to her downfall, and so did the decisions she made. As she was conscious of her effect and what she was doing it is evident she was a victim who made her demise.