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In the play 'Othello' by William Shakespeare it could be said that in the end, despite the killing of Desdemona, Othello and Emilia that, " we grieve that the innocent have suffered but we are satisfied that evil has been defeated", but to what extent is this actually true?

There is no doubt that 'Othello' is full of the suffering of innocence. None more so than the suffering of Desdemona who can be described in no other way than pure and virtuous. At no point in the play can it be said that she shows anything other than these qualities and there really can be no justification for the fate that befalls her. 'She is indeed perfection', which is stated by Cassio, is the perfect description of this woman and yet she arguably suffers most within the text. Not only is her integrity questioned, the man she loves and has given her soul to, denounces her as a 'whore' and a 'strumpet' and in the end murders her.

There is no doubt either that Othello suffers within the play. He is driven to kill Desdemona, the woman he loves, due to the notion that she has lied, cheated and is ultimately a lustful adulteress.

His innocence however, could be questioned. The only proof that Desdemona has done the things she had been accused of is that which is in Othello's imagination. He never really has any real proof, just suggestions. It is in fact his jealousy and imagination that makes him believe that Desdemona is an adulteress. Without his jealous tendencies, the seed of suspicion could never have been planted. As well as the circumstances it is a personal failing within Othello himself that leads to the murder of his wife and so therefore he is not completely innocent in his suffering, or that of Desdemona.

Despite Othello's already jealous personality playing an important role in the events, it cannot be denied that Iago is the character who initiates, and through exploiting Othello's jealous nature and the naivety of Desdemona, brings about the suffering of all. The blame, to a great extent, lies with Iago. His character is nasty, crude and disrespectful. This is shown in the scene where he encourages Roderigo to inform Brabantio (Desdemona's father) of her whereabouts. He says, 'an old black ram, is tupping your white ewe', which is an altogether crude and animalistic way to describe the act of love making between two people who are clearly in love.

He again uses a vulgar description of the pair when he says, 'your daughter covered with a Barbary horse'. Despite talking about Othello in this derogatory way he pretends to be his friend throughout the play. He clearly states that 'I follow him to serve my turn upon him' and 'I must show out a flag and sign of love, which is indeed but a sign', which shows his vindictive and scheming nature. Although he pretends to be a friend to Othello, he is actually only doing it in order to let him suggest that his wife isn't the woman he thought she was. With this in mind, the most truthful words that Iago says are, 'I am not what I am'.

Iago never actually does anything, he doesn't kill or hurt anyone physically and yet he undoubtedly lies behind the suffering within the play. This makes what he's doing all the more sinister. His evil nature is unquestionable and so when he is found out at the end of the play it could be said that evil has been defeated. However, Iago's true colours being shown and him being punished

hasn't stopped him doing what he set out to. He has after all still made Othello suffer significantly and in turn got his revenge.

In conclusion I feel that although it is true that innocence has suffered a great deal throughout the play, the fact that Othello played a role in his own suffering cannot be over looked. Nor can the question of to what extent he really was innocent in the whole scenario. In addition to this there is the question of, has evil (Iago) really been defeated? I don't believe that it has, as in my opinion, evil has done what it set out to do and has in fact won.