

# Othello is more responsible for desdemonas murder than iago - literature review

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Othello by William Shakespeare is a classic example of a Good vs. Evil story. Iago is the quintessential Evil where as Desdemona takes on the mantle of Good, pure and innocent. Caught in the battle between the two is Othello, who personifies the essence of a flawed human nature. It is up to the human to decide which side to take in the battle. Othello falls for the schemes of Iago and doubts Desdemona without just reason or cause. Hence, he is more responsible for killing Desdemona. Othello goes from a self-assured man who is successful and has the love of his wife to ruining his perfect world and killing the woman he so dearly loves, without a just cause.

## **Othello Reviewed**

Othello is a black warrior who has found success in the Venetian army and is highly respected for his achievements. When asked to choose a lieutenant, Othello chooses Cassio over Iago, who planned on using Othello to further himself. Iago feels spurned and starts scheming on how to exact his revenge. He is approached by Roderigo who is smitten by Desdemona and lusts for her. Desdemona is the daughter of Brabantio, a high standing Venetian nobleman and the love of Othello's life. Aware of the fact that Desdemona has eloped and gotten married to Othello, Iago uses Roderigo to alert Brabantio who swears to bring his daughter back. Unaware of Iago's treachery, Othello is summoned to a council. After hearing Desdemona's testimony that she married Othello by her own will, the council permits the lovers to stay together.

The lovers have to move to Cypress where a Turkish attack is anticipated.

They are accompanied by Iago, Cassio, Emilia (Iago's wife) as well as

Roderigo who travels in disguise. Here, Iago takes his scheme further. He incites Cassio into fighting with Roderigo and Othello fires him for this act. Cassio approaches Desdemona to plead his case and she assures him that she has already spoken to Othello to reinstate him. "Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it, That he would steal away so guilty-like, Seeing your coming" [ CITATION Sha48 p " Act III, Scene III" l 1033 ]. It is at this point that Iago starts poisoning Othello's mind with doubts about Desdemona and Cassio having an affair. A jealous Othello starts mistrusting Desdemona. Iago uses several plots to add fuel to Othello's jealous fire and his anger and doubt grow.

Othello finally gets convinced of Desdemona's infidelity when he sees with Cassio a handkerchief he had presented her. Desdemona claims she still has the handkerchief but fails to produce it and promotes Cassio's cause again. A severely angry Othello decides to kill both Cassio as well as Desdemona. Iago helps him plot the murder. He causes a fight between Cassio and Roderigo and when he realizes that Cassio is injured, he kills Roderigo himself. Othello, believing that Cassio is dead, goes to kill Desdemona himself. When he confronts Desdemona, she professes her innocence but does not believe her and smothers her.

While he is doing this, Emilia knocks at the door. Desdemona is barely alive when he opens the door and tells Emilia that she has been murdered. She also absolves Othello of the guilt before dying. When Othello tells Emilia that he killed Desdemona because of her infidelity, she reveals that it was Iago who had plotted the entire situation and it was, in fact, she who had found the

handkerchief and given it to Iago. In his rage and on the verge of hysteria, Othello stabs Iago who runs away. Othello then asks everyone to remember him as he is, stabs himself, kisses Desdemona and dies. Iago is eventually caught and tried for his crimes.

The Battle Between Good and Evil is Ultimately Decided by Humans.

Iago believes that it is only foolish people who show their real character. He hides his devious nature behind a mask of feigned loyalty and trustworthiness. Despite being so black hearted and self-centered, he is able to make everyone around him believe that he is their well wisher and closest confidante. Iago doubts that Othello has slept with his wife. This is and his thirst for attaining greater success, drives him to focus all his mind on destroying Othello. Iago has no qualms in admitting to the reader as well himself that he is Evil. He is well aware of his nature and has no regret about being what he is. So pure is the darkness within him, that he does not think twice before ruining lives to achieve his own selfish motives. He intentionally schemes in a manner that would lead to the death of Cassio and Desdemona, in fact, he even helps Othello plan the acts. He hides facts, lies and plants seeds of doubts in Othello's mind, understanding well his jealous nature. He values no life other than his own.

Iago equals himself to the Devil, and, like the Devil, he uses human weakness to benefit himself. Othello is human and, as such, vulnerable to lures of the Devil. Othello has several flaws that ultimately lead to his downfall. The most prominent causes of his flaws are:

It is important to note that Othello, despite his high achievement, is referred to as a ' Moor', or a black slave, behind his back. Othello is aware that his race is a major challenge between him and societal acceptance. This makes him over-conscious of the image that he has built up in peoples' minds. Even though he does not realize it or admit it, he yearns to be seen as an equal to the white people around him.

Like Iago, Othello too has both an outward appearance and a hidden face. While he appears to be a self-assured, eloquent and respectable man to others and indeed, in his own sight as well, he is actually highly insecure.

His achievements cause Othello to be overly proud. He realizes that, for a person of his background to be as highly ranked as he is, is a matter of pride. This pride also drives him to upkeep a false image in public, to an extent that he believes he is what he portrays.

4. Iago knows and accepts what he truly is. In fact, he is so well aware of his character, that he uses it to his own benefit. Othello, on the hand, lives in denial, choosing to believe the self assured image he displays in public and not acknowledging his jealous nature. Both represent themselves, Iago does it to manipulate people while Othello to gain acceptance and feed his pride. All of these ' human' flaws make Othello overly vulnerable to Iago devious schemes. However, like every human being, Othello has Good influences as well. Desdemona represents purity and innocence, traits typical of Good. She is clear from all the allegations placed on her by Othello and even pleads her case. However, her innocence prevents her from seeing through Othello's insecurities and she fails to notice signs of his breakdown. Never the less,

Desdemona never gives Othello any concrete reason to mistrust her. She is a woman who goes against her father by testifying in favor of Othello before the City Council. She also defies societal norms, being the daughter of a nobleman and marrying a man who is called a ' Moor'.

Yet, this is not proof enough for her loyalty towards Othello. Although Iago plants doubts of infidelity in his mind, at the end of the day, it is Othello who chooses to believe Iago over Desdemona. He is so taken in by Iago's ' logic' that he does not wait to clarify his doubts with Desdemona. " What is left when honor is lost?" This maxim from first century BC plays a pivotal role in Shakespeare's play Othello [ CITATION Kin11 | 1033 ]. Not giving her a chance to explain herself, he rushes through his plans and kills her.

Brabantio's words stay with Othello. He is far too insecure, subconsciously aware that the beautiful Desdemona is ' above' him and so believes this is reason enough for her to betray him. However, as he is not self-aware, he fails to see through Iago's schemes. Had Othello has faith in himself as well as faith in his love, he would not have murdered the woman who loved him enough to forgive him for killing her. It is faith that empowers a human being to choose Good over Evil and it is Othello's lack of faith that makes him guilty of Desdemona's murder.

## **Works Cited**

King, Laura. " The True Beast in Othello." <http://castle.eiu.edu>. 24 April 2011 .