

The idea of reality and illusion in william shakespeare's othello

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



An individual's self-perception varies based on what they believe is an illusion and what they believe is reality. In today's society, this same idea is present when people interact with one another, as they may retain a different perception of what others think of them compared to what the blunt truth is. As a matter of fact, humans possess the potential to influence the behaviours and thoughts of others in a way that benefits themselves, and lets down those close to them.

William Shakespeare in Othello develops the idea that the characters on the island of Cyprus are constantly being deceived by one another, implanting a sense of illusion, ultimately shielding the reality and altering their self-perception. Roderigo's self-perception is manipulated throughout the entire text by Iago, where he is convinced and is assured that Desdemona's rightful place is right by his side.

In Act 1, we first encounter Roderigo as the wealthy, dull-witted Venetian, and believes that he can essentially win over Desdemona by sending her expensive and lavish gifts. Right from the beginning, we see Iago's devilish manipulation play out where Roderigo exclaims, "Tush, never tell me! I take it much unkindly That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this". As the reader, we see that Roderigo has given blind faith to Iago, but is already suspicious of his true motives. Iago also takes Othello's side when Brabantio's men and Roderigo come for him where he attacks his 'partner in crime' by saying, "You, Roderigo! come, sir, I am for you". Luckily for Iago, he is able to cover for himself by explaining that it is all part of the revolt to devastate Othello, and continues with his

cunningness by taking advantage of Roderigo without him suspecting anything. After this encounter, Roderigo's self-perception remains unaltered in that he still believes that Desdemona will be his own once Iago carries out his plan, as he can see that it is evident that Othello has full faith in Iago. When seeking to reconcile and discover the reality, Roderigo's perception is slowly being faded away mostly by pure love, and is unable to realize the truth. In Scene 3, Roderigo witnesses the encounter between Brabantio and Desdemona, confirming her faithfulness for Othello where she also chooses her husband over her father, driving him into severe depression. He tells Iago that he would rather "drown thyself" than live another day and continue to be embarrassed by Iago and his foolery. Once again, Iago strikes back by comforting him, and guarantees him that "there are many events in the womb which will be delivered".

Furthermore, Roderigo comes along to Cyprus with the rest of the characters, and is given the task of angering Cassio so that he will lose his job. Iago's reasoning is that Cassio is in love with Desdemona and that this fact stands in his way of executing the perfectly laid out plan he has come up with. Roderigo once again doubts Iago's statement that Cassio loves Desdemona as "She's full of blessed condition", and Cassio's actions towards her were simply "courtesy". After some more convincing by Iago, Roderigo agrees to be the undertaker of his plan. Roderigo's mindset has anew been altered, along with his self-perception of who he truly is outside of his love quarrel for Desdemona. He is incapable to reconcile that he is just in all an illusion and is being used for Iago's self gain; his innocence is

detering and getting torn away bit by bit as the leech hole is getting larger. Later on we see that he is getting desperate as his “ money is almost spent” and that he has experienced more pain for the amount he has essentially thrown away, but is still willing to be Iago’s dirty man by committing all these misdemeanors, ultimately conspiring that it will help his case towards Desdemona and that honest Iago would never betray him no matter how absurd the plan sounds. Finally, Roderigo receives the long-awaited hunch that Iago is using him, and confronts him. He complains that, “ Every day thou daffest me with some device, Iago”. He also says that he will go to Desdemona and tell her that he will stop troubling her if she simply returns his expensive gifts, and that if she is confused about what he is talking about, he will “ seek satisfaction” of Iago. All this time, Iago has never provided an update on the progress of the plan, and Roderigo has not even seen Desdemona once. At this point, Roderigo is one step from reconciling the conflict between illusion and reality. Unfortunately for Roderigo, as soon as Iago grants him some esteem, Roderigo dissolves every negative thoughts towards Iago and is willing to be his servant once again. He misses his last chance to interpret the meaning of his own behaviour. This time, Iago promises that “ If thou the next night following enjoy not Desdemona , take me from this world with treachery and devise engines for my life”. At this moment, Roderigo’s self-perception of being an intellectual has drastically shot up, as he believes that this time Iago has no excuses left to use or he dies. He also has run out of all options; nothing remaining. As Roderigo thrusts towards Cassio and attempts to murder him, Cassio retaliates and injures him in return. Roderigo calls out for help, which turns out to be a

mistake. “ O damn’d Iago! O inhuman dog” were poor Roderigo’s last words. In this final chapter of the text, Roderigo is unable to come to know himself self-perception struggled to grasp on to reality, and instead gave into hope and desperation, which ended up costing his life.

Roderigo is an example of how a diluted self-perception can affect an individual when attempting to reconcile the conflict between illusion and reality. Although someone can start out as clueless and too fazed to realize the truth, they can eventually grasp a sense of reality, while making errors along the way. When someone ventures to own up to the truth, they can generate a positive perception on those around them.