

# Othello, act iv literature review example

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



The sense of love, compassion and nobility is exhausted in Othello. It is replaced by a growing sense of misogyny, harshness and ignominy. Act IV of the play depicts this replacement, and we find that the principle characters are not those who act, but those who suffer.

In the first scene of the act, and after being convinced of the unfaithfulness of his wife, Othello confronted Desdemona and accused her of betrayal. His imagination is manipulated by Iago's lies that he interprets his wife's denial as a proof of her sin. Even though Othello does not deny his wife's "soft and kind nature", yet he is led to believe that she is "a subtle whore". Othello's speech sounds very contradictory and paradoxical.

In scene two, Othello conducted another confrontation with Emilia, the closest friend of his wife. Again, although Emilia admits seeing and knowing nothing about Desdemona's relationship with Cassio, and although she swears and emphasizes on Desdemona's chastity and innocence, Othello could not believe her. He even becomes more certain about his wife's guilt. The lack of trust that Othello expresses towards his wife and Emilia emerges from his misogyny. This misogyny developed in him as a result of the psychological and emotional shock that Iago instilled in him. As such, Othello could never believe any woman, whether his wife or another. His questioning was, then, only to further ascertain Desdemona's betrayal.

After such mistreatment and humiliation, Desdemona and Emilia retreated to Desdemona's bedroom as Othello ordered in the third scene. In this scene, both women had an interesting conversation that tells a lot about the images of women during the Renaissance. Desdemona who, at first, refuses the image of herself as the chaste, silent and obedient maiden of her father's

fantasy, and who transgressed the patriarchal codes of behavior that were established, turns out to be depicted as chaste, silent and submissive to her husband. As a daughter, she was rebellious; while as a wife she became rather meek representing the Renaissance male image of women.

However, Emilia expressed dejection towards both Othello and Desdemona. She does not agree with Desdemona's submissiveness and surrender saying " let husbands know, their wives have sense like them (they see, and smell, and have their palates both for sweet and sour, just as their husbands have" (96-99). Thus, Emilia becomes even more reasonable and rebellious. And Shakespeare seems to side with her as she is the most reasonable and realistic among the other characters.

Recent criticism of Shakespeare has moved away from liberal humanism and has tried to relate the construction of Othello's and Desdemona's sexuality to Renaissance discourses. Othello not only interiorizes Iago's conception of him as alien, foreign, other, but also Desdemona. Through her active exercise of choice in marriage, she allows her own desire to become demonized. In a sense, this leads Othello to believe Iago and doubt his wife. It also leads Desdemona to accept her fate and surrender. Her passive attitude towards her husband's doubts and accusations could also be explained as a result of a sense of guilt that she realised after being disobedient as a daughter. Thus, by accepting her fate, she is accepting punishment for being a monstrous daughter.

## **Works Cited**

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