

Desdemona, othello | analysis



Desdemona

The character of Desdemona in Othello seems at first glance, nearly perfect. She undoubtedly possesses the characteristics of a truly good person. She is kind, loyal, an innocent and above all the love she has for Othello is pure. But despite the fact that's she is falsely accused of adultery, and wrongly murdered for it, she is not entirely without responsibility. Desdemona's virtues becomes her flaws and her deceptive action all contribute to her downfall. Shakespeare puts the characters in this play and relationships under microscope to portray their bad sides. By marrying Othello, Desdemona was showing that she was strong enough and educated enough to break the societal confines of passivity for women.

Desdemona portrays to be such a good person she doesn't even protest the injustice inflicted on her, but she is far from innocent. Desdemona has no knowledge of jealousy. She is too pure and kind hearted but lacks worldly wisdom. Desdemona never stood up for herself; allows everything to happen to her without an insinuation of struggle, including her own death.

Even if someone is absolutely perfect doesn't mean they will live a blessed life. In life nobody is perfect and we are defined by our goodness and our flaws. It's a fact that a persons flaws get noticed more than the good they've done. You could spend your entire life doing well but if you were to commit a crime that's all you would be remembered for.

Deceptions plays a big part in this play, it also appears many times. Most of the time the degree of deception is different. Most of the characters in the play use deception to get what they want, and they use deception through

body language and verbally. It's ironic that Desdemona has made the first deception, and in the end she is left with the worst faith of all. Iago does have a point when he accuses Desdemona of being a clever actress, for she has indeed managed to deceive her father completely, and to go absolutely against his wishes. Of course, it is not safe to accept everything Iago says, because his own point of view is so evil. Desdemona's deception was done with only good-hearted intentions. If someone deceives others with good intentions then in a way the deception is partially good. If it's bad intentions then the person is bad. Desdemona wanted to protect her father, because she knew her father would find out about her and Othello, so she would be delaying the inevitable pain which her father was going to feel. Good intentions don't always have good outcomes, because due to her deceit her father died.

Although deception is always meant to deceive, Iago's deception is much more severe. When Iago said to Othello "she did deceive her father by marrying you", he was intentionally trying to anger Othello and place doubt in his mind. It made Othello wonder if she can deceive her own father what makes him think she won't deceive him as well. Even though deception is defined as trickery and malicious, deception can be through its intentions. A mistake Desdemona makes is that she decides to ask Iago for help because she wants him to confirm her fidelity to Othello to the man who condemned her from the start was not a good idea.

Instead of discussing her domestic problems with someone else she should've just been more open with Othello and talk to him about the problem. There is a lot of lack of communication between Othello and

Desdemona. It's understandable that they just could've sat down and discuss their problems, iagos lies wouldn't work.

The next person Desdemona deceits is her husband, and it's this deception that helps Iago the Most, with his evil plans. Othello give Desdemona the handkerchief as a symbol of his love. The handkerchief was woven by a 200 year old sibyl; his mother used it to keep his father faithful to her. So for Othello, the handkerchief meant marital fidelity. The pattern of strawberries on the kerchief had been printed with the dye from the hearts of mummified virgins and so it's suggestive of a guarantee of virginity. Desdemona unknowingly misplaces and can't remember where she placed it. The moment she lost the handkerchief it caused the exact opposite of the mystical powers of the handkerchief to worked it's bad luck on Desdemona.

Something so dear and precious to her was carelessly lost. She tells him a flat out lie about its whereabouts. The handkerchief is used as the one and only piece of major evidence to prove the infidelity of Desdemona. The reliance of the handkerchief is inappropriate in that the play could have dramatically changed very easily if it wasn't lost, and if Desdemona could've handled that situation better. If Desdemona just told Othello the truth about the handkerchief and Emilia had decided on another course of actions then Iago wouldn't have substantial evidence against Desdemona.

Desdemona is extremely naïve, but we can believe that she has been faithful and has never thought of straying from her husband. When Desdemona says "Dost thou in conscience think-tell me Emilia-that there be woman do abuse their husbands in such gross kind?"(4. 3. 1020). This is very naïve of her.

Desdemona constantly shows mixed signals, even though she shows signs of naivety but how are we to reconcile this naivety with the boldness that she displays in the senate scene. The fact that Desdemona is naïve is not her fault because in Venetian society wives and daughters were cloistered. The women of the 17th century were most likely to surpass the norms of sexual morality set for Venetian woman of that time. Only a lucky successful few were able to have the true knowledge about sexuality. Venetian society brain washed Desdemona's mind due to how she was raised. The wives had to obey their husband no matter what. If she doesn't let her husband rule the household their love and life would be in ruins. Desdemona is portrayed as a spirited and independent woman, marriage to a soldier made her change herself. Gradually she loses her self-confidence. Like Emilia a battered wife who's gone through much more in life, Desdemona abandons her ability to think for herself. Both women are portrayed as victims of Venetian marriages. Since Desdemona was brave enough to defy her father and marry the man she wanted, that act of independence took away the gender barriers of the Venetian society and it threatened the male authority. Many wonder "which is the 'real' Desdemona: the bold speaker before the council, or the naïve sheltered girl? Both Desdemonas are believable. They are one and the same, and her character appears reasonable consistent throughout." (Hadfield. 83).

Desdemona has a halo effect throughout the play, she is the kind hearted and willing to help others in need. Iago's plans sets in motion when he suggests that Desdemona put in a good word for Cassio so he could get his position back. Once again her deception was done with only good hearted

intentions. Desdemona is at fault in her wifely conduct and innocently supplies the evidence that leads to her own death through assertion of her own independence. The ways she tried to convince Othello to give Cassio back his position was not the smartest way.

Constantly talking about another man to your husband would always bring questionably doubt to anyone even a devout good person like Desdemona. Othello knows Desdemona is wanted and desired by many, so every time she brings up the topic of Cassio it makes him wonder why he's so important to her that she keeps bringing up his name. If Desdemona could've just gave up trying to help Cassio because it was clear Othello wasn't listening to her about him she wouldn't have giving him reasons to doubt her fidelity.

Not all acts of deception are done with intentions of protecting one you love. Iago is the only person who always had bad intentions in his deception while Desdemona's deceptions were done with good intentions. Iago deceives many people in the play and can be compared to the devil. Nothing in life happens by chance everything has actions that have consequences.

Her honesty would never have been questioned if she was completely honest, more open with her husband and less careless about the things she said and did. Regardless of the truth of any of those deceptions her deceit of her father is what causes her downfall, because no good can come from disobeying your parents.

The question in the back of every one's mind is how we know Desdemona is innocent? Think of it this way how do you know anybody is innocent? If they're possibilities that what she is being alleged for can happen and has

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substantial evidence against her then who wouldn't believe it? Its stated that " nobody knows that Desdemona is innocent; we believe she is. If it is adultery of which she is accused then there has been no opportunity, but if it is more generally alleged that she has had sexual relations with cassio and even with others then we do not know that she has not".

I wonder why the woman who stood against her father before the venetian senate goes so submissively to her death. It's not to say that she loved Othello more than her father, the play just shows us two different side of her. Desdemona unwittingly colludes in the preparation of the scene of her ritual demise, you see how she's change from a young lade to a sexual alert, vivid person to a frozen body. It is difficult to avoid her conclusion in the end.

Desdemona argues her case until she realizes that hope is lost when Othello tells her cassio is dead. In my opinion she should've never gave up when you life is being threatened. She was aware of her upcoming fate. Her word ' betrayed' of cassio lets us know. She knows who ever has betrayed cassio has also manipulated her husband against her because till the end she never blames Othello, because till the end she still refers to her husband as ' my lord'.

Desdemona became a passive victim, her account of her mother's maid Barbara and her willow song proved her passivity. Desdemona knows of her impending death, but she is too good and too devout to do anything about it. Her singing the willow song foreshadows her death, an proves she's given up hope. Love can make people do some crazy things, and love can make you blind to the truth around you. Desdemona loved Othello so much she was

willing to go through the pain he was putting her through. She cannot help being made into a sign, and she cannot determine her signification. To what extent can we control ourselves, and love. Desdemona is the martyr of the play the tragic female heroine who ends up being sacrificed to satisfy to fates. Desdemona, although an intelligent woman seeking liberation, fell into iago's trap because she loved Othello and was upset that he had considered her a "whore." Desdemona's naivety, deceptions with good intentions and her passivity all play parts in her downfall, with the help of iago's evil schemes. Woman in time depend for their class status from their affiliation with man, and Desdemona throws away that status and the protection is affords when she marries outside the categories her cultures allow. Since she desire something different, she was punished not only in the lost of status but even her life. The woman's desire is punished and ultimately its monstrous inspiration as well. Desdemona as "helplessly passive." Is the reason why she couldn't stop her death and was able to do nothing whatsoever.

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