

# Othello and the moor of venice

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



The play, the Tragedy of Othello and the Moor of Venice, written by William Shakespeare has many underlying and reoccurring themes throughout. One major theme is that of betrayal and loyalty. During the entire play every character is either loyal to, or betrays another character. The theme of betrayal and loyalty is seen through every character and every act in the play especially in Iago, Desdemona, and Othello. Every character that is portrayed as being loyal is disloyal, and every character that is portrayed as being disloyal is loyal.

No one ever knows who and who not to trust, and this adds a lot of drama and build up to the story line. This play shows you that you can never trust anyone, and that you should keep your friends close but your enemies even closer. In such a web of love, hatred and betrayal, it is really hard to say who are the protagonist and the antagonist. But, through these gray areas, one could see that sometimes such strong emotions could change one to another.

Yet with A. C. Bradley, the play was described as “ by far the most romantic figure among Shakespeare’s heroes”(Shakespearean Tragedy, 1).

This is an irony at play. The description is quite unexpected since it is about a man who murders his own wife. Nonetheless, it could be observed that this crime resulted from Othello’s feelings of hate for Desdemona which had when their relationship began, started as an overwhelming love for her. The transformation from love to hate that transpired within Othello also inflicted the characters Iago and Roderigo and hatred induced them to murder of

innocent people as well. Roderigo's love for Desdemona was transformed into hate towards any man that he thought was loved by her.

Iago's love for his job and his wife, Emilia changed into a destructive hatred of Cassio and Othello. As a result of their hatred Cassio, Emilia, and at the end they were killed. The connection between love and hate in William Shakespeare's "Othello" is the ugly feeling of jealousy that caused such transformations. Jealousy can be described as a fear of losing something or someone that is valuable (Godfrey 2). As minor as this feeling appears to be by that definition, it can take on varying degrees of damaging behavior. Othello, Roderigo, and Iago had become paralyzed by jealousy.

Their thoughts, actions, and behaviors were ruled by it. Jealousy caused their inability to act rationally. They became paranoid and unable to love. Roderigo begins with a small jealousy of Othello for being married to Desdemona. It isn't until Iago makes Roderigo believe Desdemona does not really love Othello that Roderigo becomes destructive. Roderigo pays Iago for this false hope that he will be with Desdemona (1162). When he believes he is getting closer to being with her, however, Iago tells him that it might not happen because Desdemona is in love with Cassio (1169-70).

Roderigo is greatly angered by this and resolves to do what it takes to stop Cassio from getting Desdemona even if it means taking his life. His attempt to kill Cassio, however, is unsuccessful, and instead he is the one injured (1175). Roderigo is no longer consumed with thoughts of being with Desdemona. Instead he is consumed with feelings of hatred toward those who might have her love and attention. Othello had a deep love for

Desdemona in the beginning of the play. He was however also very insecure of Desdemona's love for him (Mabillard 1).

He doesn't understand why she would go against her father and her society by marrying a man that is black (1). The only reason that he can come up with is that she married him for his courageous journeys (1). In Act I scene iii he explains to the Duke, " She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd" (Shakespeare 1157). In Act III scene ii he tries to put his doubts to rest by telling himself that Desdemona's compassionate and virtuous nature makes it possible for her to love him (Mabillard 1).

However, when Iago starts to plant ideas of her infidelity into Othello's head the doubts resurface and his insecurity becomes stronger than ever before (2). His insecurity about his worth to Desdemona combined with the reaffirmation from Iago of her affair creates his heated jealousy. After Iago provides the last piece of proof that Othello needs (the handkerchief in Act IV Scene i) Othello only has hatred for Desdemona. But it must be understood that, Desdemona, is a character of both betrayal and loyalty. Yet in a very different way, for when she is disloyal to a character it is out of loyalty and love for another character.

She must lie to her father to be with her true love Othello Desdemona tells her father that she is loyal to him, but has to choose Othello over him (Othello, 1, 3, 208-220).. In relation to the history of the Moors in Europe, the Moors were looked down upon as with Desdemona's father looked down on Othello. Moor's were seen as being barbaric and ruthless warriors, only bred for being ruthless warriors and nothing else. That is why it is so profound

that Desdemona is so undeniably in love with Othello and will do whatever it takes to be with him, even turn her back on her own family.

Desdemona is always loyal to Othello throughout the play and Iago does his best to disprove this by getting into Othello's mind. Othello believes Iago and says Desdemona is disloyal and cheats on him and does not trust her when she says, "For 'twas this hand that gave away my heart." (Othello, 3, 4, 52)

Desdemona does her best to prove to Othello that it is only he that she loves and no one else. Othello has been deeply brainwashed by Iago and is scared into believing that Desdemona may be cheating on him with Cassio.

This causes Othello to seek revenge on Cassio, and ruins his relationship with Desdemona. Iago really is the mastermind of all betrayals and jealousy, and Othello falls for it badly. As Albert Gerard explained in his article "Egregiously and Ass', The Dark Side of the Moor: A View of Othello's Mind," if Desdemona failed him than everything failed him (5). He was dependent on her for representing truth in the world (5). She represented an ideal image of purity to him (5). In Act III scene iii he exclaims, "If she be false, O! Then heaven mocks itself" (Shakespeare 1191).

Since "the vision" of her is so highly valued, the possibility that she is a lie devastates Othello (5). D. R. Godfrey notes that Othello's jealousy is strong enough to make him crazy ("Shakespeare and the Green-Eyed Monster" 2). He loses the ability to think rationally which is why he doesn't seek the truth from those supposedly involved and the circumstantial evidence is enough, in his eyes, to justly murder Desdemona (2). Godfrey further supports Othello's inability of rational thought by his idea that Desdemona and Iago have slept together "a thousand times"(3).

If Othello were thinking rationally, he would have known that there couldn't have been enough time for them to have that deep of an affair (3). His hatred of Cassio is apparent as he tells Iago " Within these three days let me hear thee say that Cassio's not alive" (Shakespeare 1196). Before he comes to believe that Cassio is having an affair with his wife, Othello valued him enough to appoint him as lieutenant. Othello transforms from a man who loves deeply and lives with honor into a man full of hatred and vengeance. Like Roderigo, such a transformation occurs because of jealousy brought on by the words of Iago.

Iago makes the cause of his loathing for Othello and Cassio apparent in the first scene of Act I: Cassio's appointment as lieutenant being one (1145) and the second being his suspicion that Othello has slept with his wife, Emilia (1163). D. R. Godfrey describes these experiences to Iago as " devastating, to the point of working a profound and sudden change in Iago, a virtual metamorphosis " (" Shakespeare and the Green-Eyed Monster 6). Othello's trust of Iago shows that he had once been a loyal, honest man (Watkinson 2). He even refers to him as " honest Iago" on multiple occasions (2).

Watkinson explains that Othello's dependency on Iago becomes even stronger when Iago brings the supposed affair to his attention (" The Ironic Interdependence of Othello and Iago 3). He also manipulates Roderigo into thinking that he is only looking out for his best interests. Iago's jealousy breeds a stronger hatred than Othello's and Roderigo; so strong that he doesn't care who gets hurt in his revenge (Godfrey 6). He wants everyone to suffer like he has (6). Iago disregards Roderigo's well being when he tells him that he should get rid of Cassio so that he can be with Desdemona.

He also disregards the life of Desdemona by telling Othello that she is sleeping with Cassio. He directs his hatred towards anyone that seems to live honestly (Godfrey 6). The more his plan seemed to work, the more his hatred was acted out. In the last scene of the play, Iago kills Roderigo for the fear that he might reveal his plan (Shakespeare 1222). He then calls Emilia a “villainous whore” and stabs her after she tells Othello that she had picked up that handkerchief and given it to Iago at his request (1231). Iago represents the strongest form of hate in Othello.

While Roderigo and Othello took out their hatred on only those that they thought had caused it, Iago took it out on those innocent as well. In Act III Scene iv, Emilia tells Desdemona that “They are not ever jealous for the cause, but jealous for they are jealous; ‘tis a monster begot upon itself, born on itself” (1201). Othello, Roderigo, and Iago were each responsible for letting their jealousy get out of control. Although Iago was partly to blame, Othello is responsible for not relying on contrary evidence to prevent him from murdering Desdemona. Roderigo is responsible for letting his hatred lead him to attempting to murder Cassio.

Jealousy turned romantic love into anger and hatred for Othello and Roderigo. Iago’s jealousy, however, manifested from a love of power, making it all too dangerous. He sought out power by manipulating others to get the revenge he wanted on Othello and Cassio. All three, however, are examples of the destructiveness that can come from love struck by jealousy. Paradoxically it is Iago who tells Othello “O! Beware my lord, of jealousy; it is the green-ey’d monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on”(Shakespeare 1188). Ultimately, this becomes the downfall of everybody.