

# Othello and iago

[Literature](#), [Character](#)



In the 21 st century everything has become more visualized. The books do not have the same power as they used to have in the previous centuries. Nowadays, many books or written stories have been made into screen adoption . William Shakespeare wrote Othello the Moor of Venice to be performed. There are more than fifty movies, ballet performances and musicals about Othello. Each of them is different and shows a director's unique perspective. What is it about this piece that makes people perform it so many times? In each generation people are trying to visualize the immortal theme of how manipulation and jealousy can change people's lives. For example, in the movie Othello (1995) Oliver Parker contradicts with the text and shows the audience his view and understanding of the literary text. In the movie Othello (1995) with Laurence Fishburne, Parker, the director, uses actor's performance, symbolic scenes and decor to help the audience emotionally understand the text. Parker's production of the movie is very close to the original play. He uses the same language and wording, but visualization and his perspective of the play helps the audience experience empathy towards characters.

For example, in the text Desdemona's father describes her, " A maiden never bold / of spirit so still and quiet that her motion blushed at herself "(I. III . 94-96). In the movie the actress is young, beautiful and seems very innocent. Othello is described in the text as an exotic character, who shows an animalistic side. Roderigo says about Othello, " To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor / ...An extravagant and wheeling stranger". (I. I. 126, 136). When Iago talks to Brabantio and tries to convince him that his daughter is with Othello he compares Othello to an animal. Iago says, " You'll have your

daughter covered with a Barbary horse". I. I. 112). Or he also says, " Your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs" (I. I. 116). In the movie Othello has an intimidating appearance. He has pierced ears, wears jewelry and has tattoos. The right casting of characters helps to reveal them and grow particular attitude towards these characters in the movie. The audience when looking at beautiful and young Desdemona will most likely take her side and have compassion towards her. In contrast to Desdemona, Othello is more brutal and reveals bellicosity and rigidity. In the text Shakespeare describes Othello as a great warrior, who has suffered a lot.

He doesn't know much about love or peaceful life without battles. Othello says about himself: " Rude am I in my speech, / and little blessed with the soft phrase of piece... The story of my life/ from year to year-the battles, sieges, fortunes / that I have passed... (I. III. 81-83, 129-131). This describes Othello as unexperienced, impulsive person, who is more used to violence than love. In the text when Iago tells Othello that Desdemona is not honest with him, Othello burst out at Iago: " Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof; or, by the worth of mine eternal soul, thou hadst been better born a dog than answer my waked wrath! (III.. III. 361-364). Othello is jealous of Desdemona but because he has no proof of it, he works his anger on Iago. In the movie Parker introduces a scene where Othello tries to drown Iago in the sea to emphasize Othello's anger. Another scene where Othello shows his violence is when he slaps Desdemona across her face. One thing that can explain Othello's inability to control anger and be violent is that he is left

without his duty. He was sent to Cyprus to defend people from the Turks but the war has never happened because of the storm that killed the Turks.

Othello is left with himself, his thoughts and relationships with Desdemona. Marriage is a new experience to him, he does not know how to behave. Othello doubts his decision of getting married to Desdemona. He says, “ Why did I marry? ...O curse of marriage, / That we can call these delicate creatures ours, / and not their appetites! ” (III. III. 242, 268-270). He is not used to a peaceful life, but violence and anger. Iago is using Othello's frustration and strategy to convince Othello of Desdemona's unfaithfulness. In the movie Parker makes Iago talk to the audience that helps develop and understand his plan, how he is going to implement it.

His ideas are clear and make sense, but the audience still doesn't know how the other characters will react to it and whether he will be successful or not. Parker leaves that to the last scene when wounded Iago lies on the dead bodies of Othello, Desdemona and his wife. In this production Parker chooses and correctly considers the historical element by using the medieval costumes corresponding to that time, settings and decor of Venice with old buildings and canals with gondolas. However, he adds couple scenes that change the audience's perception of the text. In the beginning of the movie the audience sees a couple in the gondola.

The man covers his face with a mask, and then the young woman runs on the empty streets of Venice covering her face. This shows the audience that this couple are involved in some kind of a secret. Parker uses a cliché of a secret relationship by making the first scene happen at night, covering the man's face with a mask. This scene intrigues the audience and makes it

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believe that this could be a love story movie. Compare to the text where Iago and Roderigo are the first ones to be presented in the text. They talk about how Iago didn't get position of the lieutenant and how both of them hate the Moor.

Iago says: " Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago. / In following him, I follow but myself; / Heaven is my judge, not I for love or duty, / but seeming so, for my peculiar end;"(I. I. 58-60). Only in the middle of the act I scene I, readers understand that Brabantio's daughter secretly got married to the Moor and that is how Iago and Roderigo can use this against him. Iago says: " I m one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs". (I. I . 116-117). Parker's deviation from text catches the viewers attention better than just dry talks of Iago and Roderigo.

Another movie innovation is when Parker makes Othello dream about Desdemona and Cassio being together. This emphasizes how much Othello is moved by that news. In the text Shakespeare makes Othello fall into epilepsy instead. Parker is also using symbol of the handkerchief. The symbol of handkerchief is important in the play. Othello gives special power to it. He says: That handkerchief Did an Egyptian to my mother give. She was a charmer, and could almost read The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it, Twould make her amiable and subdue my father

Entirely to her love; but if she lost it Or made a gift of it, my father's eye Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt after new fancies. "( III. IV.. 50-58). In the movie Parker makes the handkerchief fly or fall on the black background in a slow motion. By doing so, he shows the audience the end of Othello and Desdemona's love and predicts their death. Another

symbolic scene that Parker introduces into the movie and doesn't exist in the text is when Iago stands next to a pit and makes two figures that represent Othello and Desdemona fall into that pit.

Parker compares Othello and Desdemona to the figures on the chessboard that were played and manipulated by Iago. Basically, he says that all that it was just a tactical game. He though connects that scene to another scene when Othello's and Desdemona's bodies are dumped to the sea. This parallel shows the audience hopelessness of the situation. This symbolic scene with figures explains how Parker understands parallels and hidden tips shown in the play. Shakespeare uses words and repeats phrases in the text to predict the end and guide the reader through the play.

For example, in the text when Brabantio says to Othello, " Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee. " (I. III. 291-292). Othello responds to him, " My life upon her faith! " (I. III. 294). Later in the text, Iago mentions it again to Othello. He says, " Look at your wife; / wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure... She did deceive her father, marrying you;( III. III. 197, 198, 206). At the end of the play Othello does exactly what he said before- he gives his life upon Desdemona's faith and kills himself.

Movies that are based on the plays or the books are showing the audience only one perception of that play or book, which is presented by the point of view of the director. Talented directors know that it is very hard to present the correct idea better than the original text. However, by making minor changes such as introducing symbolic scenes, choosing the right actors or the appropriate decor, the movie can guide the audience to a better

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understanding of the play. It can also help to develop new interpretations of the text.