

Discuss  
shakespeare's  
presentation of iago  
essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Throughout Othello, Iago is presented in many ways; as a manipulative husband, a soldier who seems to use his tactic skills when planning his evil schemes, a nasty villain, and lastly, as a two-faced friend who uses the word 'honest' a lot but never acts in that way. Iago is presented by Shakespeare as a husband to Emilia. They do not seem as much as an affectionate couple as Othello and Desdemona, as Iago seems more hostile in their relationship, 'Do not you chide; I have a thing for you.' Act III, Scene III, line 303. Here Emilia is flirting with Iago, but he just responds by calling her 'foolish'.

Again she tries to get his attention by saying, 'O, is that all? What will you give me now For that same handkerchief?' Act III, Scene III, lines 307-308. Here it seems she's asking for some passion, for obeying Iago, but when he says, 'What handkerchief?' Act III, Scene III, line 308. This shows that he's not in the mood to be all affectionate towards his wife and would rather carry on his plan, which is why he asked for the handkerchief. This perhaps shows this is a relationship based on lust rather than love. Not once does he mention his love for Emilia, which shows he probably doesn't take the role as a husband too seriously. Their relationship seems quite secretive as we do not know much about them.

From an audience's point of view we could see that as a couple Iago and Emilia are opposites of Othello and Desdemona, this could also be suggested as another reason for Iago to hate Othello for Othello has a different relationship with his wife than Iago does. As a husband Iago is seen as a controlling and scheming person. For example, he uses Emilia to get Desdemona's handkerchief. Iago wants the handkerchief, so that he can use it to put it in Cassio's lodging to make it look as if Desdemona put it there.

Also Iago knows that if Othello was to see this he would be very angry about it.

Iago knows how much the handkerchief means to Desdemona; the handkerchief is a symbol of their relationship. Emilia pleads to Iago to give the handkerchief back to Desdemona because she knows how precious the handkerchief is to Desdemona, 'Give't me again. Poor lady, she'll run mad', Act III, Scene III, line 139. From this moment on Iago must have been happy when Emilia found the handkerchief; he was asking it for ages and if she had not picked it up, Iago's accusations would have been proved wrong. Iago gets the handkerchief by snatching it off Emilia, '[snatching it] Why, what's that to you? ', Act III, Scene III, line 139.

This shows that he doesn't care about anyone at this moment; he wants to carry on his evil plans. Emilia tells him to give it back to Desdemona, 'Give't me again. Poor lady she'll run mad', Act III, Scene III, line 139. Emilia may feel a bit worried as Desdemona is her mistress, so it'll be bad on her to be disloyal like this. If she did get caught, the other characters may portray Emilia as the untrustworthy one instead of Iago, which shows just how far Iago is prepared to go. Shakespeare also presents Iago as the superior one in the relationship as he seems to be the one that controls Emilia.

For example instead of handing the handkerchief back to Desdemona, Emilia gives it to Iago. This could represent Elizabethan times where wives were meant to be loyal to their husbands and it would seem 'out of tradition' if she was to disobey Iago. From another point of view it could have been because Emilia just wants to be loved. This could also show that Iago has a

lot of power over his wife. Iago doesn't seem to care about his relationship, as it seems his relationship is all about intimacy and passion rather than a romantic relationship.

However, we don't know whether this is because he is too caught up in his evil plans. Before hearing Cassio was promoted, Iago may have treated his wife much better than he does here. Shakespeare also presents Iago as a soldier and since he has had a lot of experience in wars this explains why he thinks of his plans strategically. Knowing how inexperienced Othello is at relationships, this could have urged him on to carry on scheming.

At the beginning of the play we hear him complaining at the fact that he wasn't made lieutenant, '... three great ones of the city In personal suit to make me his lieutenant' Act I, Scene I, lines 8-10. Iago mentions that even though he has had lots of experience in war he still wasn't promoted to lieutenant. He might not have not been selected because he wasn't as good or as trustworthy as Cassio.

This is where we hear his first hatred of Othello, 'I hate the Moor,' Act I, Scene III, line 337. Iago is angry at what he's just heard and his aggression gets even worse when he starts calling Othello racist names behind his back, 'Moor' and 'black ram'. Apart from Roderigo, Iago is the only character to call Othello such racist names, which shows since he was not promoted to lieutenant he's only seeing Othello for the colour of his skin instead of for who he is. This may suggest that now Iago sees Othello as a he will show no sympathy for him whatever he plans. Iago reveals his plans in soliloquies. His training in the military makes his plans effective, especially where he plans

Othello's downfall, ' After some time, to abuse Othello's ear That he is too familiar with his wife;', Act I, Scene III, lines 386-388.

Here he is already strategically planning what to do to ruin Othello's life. He also becomes quite paranoid, ' And it is thought abroad that ' twixt my sheets,' Act I, scene III, line 378. It could be this paranoia which drives him to his evil schemes. Alternatively it could be a convenient motive for him to carry on doing his evil deeds, as a way of justifying his actions so he can truly believe it for himself. Shakespeare presents Iago as the villain of the play; he is the one that controls everything that is going on.

He gets Cassio fired from being a lieutenant and also uses Emilia to get the handkerchief when he knows that the handkerchief is a symbol of Othello's and Desdemona's relationship, '... She dying gave it to me, And bid me when my fate would have me wive,' Act III, Scene IV, lines 59-60. Since the handkerchief was given to Othello by someone precious to him, losing that handkerchief would be a mistrust. The Moor already changes with my poison:' Act III, Scene III, line 326.

Here he is aware of the changes that are happening and knows that he is a bad influence on Othello because his attitude and behaviour changes whenever he speaks to him. This is all part of his revenge and shows his plan is already taking place. Iago may enjoy seeing others hurt probably because that's how he felt when he wasn't made lieutenant. Iago is able to play the villain as he is able to manipulate other people's minds; he plays the ' honest' friend towards various characters, without getting caught. There are a few things that Iago can't control, for example when Bianca finds the

handkerchief and also where Emilia reveals all and he fails to keep her mouth shut, ' Be wise and get you home. ' Act V, Scene II, line 221.

This is when all of Iago's plans are revealed and he is no longer in control. Emilia disobeys his orders and reveals all. It seems for once in the relationship that Iago is the less dominant one. This is a noble thing for Emilia to do as she is usually obedient and not-outspoken. This is where Iago's role as a villain has ended and his two-faced personality is revealed as he stands accused of the murders of those he manipulated.

One of the most recognisable presentations of Iago is as a friend. He acts as a friend towards various characters especially Othello, I think he tries to befriend Othello the most so that he can gain more of his trust and then start deceiving him with lies. The first of the lies we hear from Iago is when he lies to Othello about Brabantio knowing of the secret wedding and how Roderigo was the one that told Brabantio, ' Nay, but he prated, And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms', Act I, Scene II, lines 6-7. Here is the first time we (as the audience) hear him lie in public.

This also gives us a sense of dramatic irony as the audience knows that he is lying, but Othello doesn't. Iago knows full well that Othello has a lack of experience when it comes to relationships and because of this he uses it to his advantage. He starts by trying to persuade Othello that Desdemona has been unfaithful to him, ' That he would steal away so guilty-like, Seeing you coming. ' Act III, Scene III, lines 39-40. Here is when Iago is trying to tell Othello that Cassio is spending more time with Desdemona and as soon as Othello comes he disappears. Iago is trying to deceive Othello's mind.

This sort of behaviour shows he's an untrustworthy friend. But because Othello doesn't realise this he thinks that Iago is a good friend and calls him 'honest' at various times throughout the play. Iago leads people on thinking that he is on their side and a good friend; this leads other characters to call him 'honest', which is ironic because he is far from it. The only time Iago reveals his true self is in his soliloquies and this is the side of Iago that no other character gets to see. This shows that he is good at keeping his real identity hidden because he is able to switch between characters (i.

e. being evil and acting as a good friend). It is easy for Iago to trick Othello as he thinks that Iago is telling the truth. The more that Iago does this, the more of 'the green eyed monster' we see inside Othello, which brings Othello to his downfall; the only person he listens to at this stage is Iago. Even when Desdemona pleads with him that she's telling the truth he doesn't listen, 'Offend you in my life; never lov'd Cassio', Act V, Scene II, line 59. Here she begs for forgiveness but Othello is filled up with Iago's lies to listen to what she has to say.

Iago is a typical villain. He is very evil minded, as we can see when he tricks Othello into thinking that Cassio is after Desdemona, 'Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio;', Act III, Scene III, line 199. I don't think that Iago's inherently evil, but what seems to start all this is the fact that he wasn't made lieutenant. Even after being made lieutenant he carries on being disloyal to people, most likely because no-one seems to have caught him out and he's always getting away with it. By seeing other people suffer he seems to get filled with pleasure about it.

Even after doing all those villainous crimes he still lives at the end of the play, whilst the people he tricked either died or suffered in great pain. I think this sort of behaviour makes him a perfect villain.