

Conviction Without Evidence

In Shakespeare's Othello the accusation of witchcraft plays a vital role in the first act. Because of his prejudices, Brabantio believes Othello uses witchcraft to obtain Desdemona's love. His facts support his accusation because he can see no other possible explanation. So what comprises evidence of wrongdoing and what does not? Brabantio has no solid evidence to support his accusation against Othello. With Desdemona's testimony in front of the Duke, Othello is dismissed of the charge to the disappointment of Brabantio. Othello is allowed the chance to defend himself with his own testimony and the testimony of Desdemona. These testimonies are what save Othello from false sentencing. Yet, later in the play, with no solid evidence, Othello accuses Desdemona of betraying him by sleeping with Cassio. Othello has a conviction, equal to that of Brabantio's, that he, Othello, is correct in these assumptions. He commits the same error as Brabantio, but with fatal errors. Othello does not specify the accusation, allow Desdemona to defend herself, or allow Cassio to come forward and testify. Othello is blinded by his jealousy and unfortunately does not learn from his own experience, which lead him to a tragic ending.

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Securely Insecure

It is interesting to me that Othello lets Iago convince him that Desdemona is having an affair. I can't help but wonder if Othello is insecure about himself and is letting Iago play upon that. Othello seems to be sure of himself on the outside, but maybe inside he knows that he shouldn't be with Desdemona. McEvoy brings up the point that Othello and Desdemona's love is based upon chivalry and the stories that Othello tells her. This love ultimately falls apart when Iago, who represents the world run by money and self-interest, forces Othello to face reality. Maybe Othello was living in a fantasy world, where it was alright for him as a Moor to fall in love with a noble woman. Iago brings him into "reality" and he realizes that he cannot be in love with her, or better yet, she cannot be in love with him because he is black.

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Evil Emilia?

I found the character of Emilia one of particular interest, she seems to have the ability to be conniving and at the same time very innocent and gentle. In the scene where she gives the handkerchief to Iago, it's hard to fathom that she had no idea of the consequences that would come from this event. Yet later in the play she pretends to have no real knowledge of what lead up to the events of Desdemona being murdered. Yet she alone, seems to have one of the most powerful speeches in the play. McEvoy discusses that perhaps Emilia puts in context much of the men's behavior at the end of Act IV. eyes

Then when Desdemona asks about women who are unfaithful to their husbands and Emilia replies that it would be up to you whether it was wrong or not. I found this reply particularly interesting since throughout the play I would consider loyalty the highest quality of marriage. But Emilia is quick to turn against her own husband when she discovers the true reason why her lady has been murdered. She does not seem to hold any loyalty towards Iago, even though she seems to be a little guilty in the scheme as well. McEvoy suggests that Emilia's answer to Desdemona's question is attempting to make a point about the equality of men and women and the men neglecting to realized this realty, had they realized this, the catastrophe would have never presented itself.