

Desdemona appears to be the perfect woman and is destroyed by the supposedly perfect man, Othello. Desdemona is the depicted perfect woman; she is subservient and loyal to her husband and she is from a sheltered and refined background. Othello, her husband, is the proffered example of masculine male perfection. Othello is man of motion, a strong warrior who acts in concurrence with his convictions and honor. Shakespeare proves that Othello is fallible too, destroyed for believing hearsay over his wife. Shakespeare in this play chooses to manipulate the ideals of a society and their striving towards perfection. Othello shows through morbid humor what can result from blind faith of believing in something as abstract as perfection. Therefore, perfection is impossible and destroys itself because it is an unnatural state.

Desdemona is depicted as female perfection throughout the opening scenes of the play. This is done through showing her strong and loyal characteristics and her love to Othello. Desdemona is shown as a woman who is independent and intelligent, willing to do anything for the sake of her love. In act one this includes standing before the Duke, her father, and the male senate of her patriarchal society and demanding to be listened to.

I do perceive here a divided duty.

To [my father] I am bound for life and education...

You are the lord of duty,

I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband,

And so much duty as my mother showed

To you, preferring you before her father,

So much I challenge that I may profess

Due to the Moor my lord (Othello, 1.3.180-189).

Desdemona shares a lot of her value system and ideals in this passage. She shows her loyalty and love for her father and her understanding of her duty to him as his daughter in the first four lines. Underlying, her portrayal as dutiful daughter is the diametrical evidence that she did not honor her father by running away to marry Othello in secret. She persists in her speech forcing the ideal of her needing to be more loyal to her husband than her father, mentioning her mother as a past model in relation to her father. Desdemona continues, going so far as to say, "I challenge" to her father and the patriarchs of her society demanding their concurrence about whom she owes greater loyalty.

Desdemona is simplistic and clear in her expressions of love. This is a character strength because it shares the honesty and strength without overpowering false sentiment that can never be backed up with reality. Othello is stuck in the trap of powerful romantic love that can't be proven or believed because of its extremity, "It gives me wonder great as my content / To see you here before me. O my soul's joy...let the labouring barque climb hills of seas / Olympian-high, and duck again as low / As hell's from heaven. If it were now to die / 'Twere now to be most happy (2.1.181-187)". Desdemona counters with her faithful expression of devoted love and the timeless nature of it, "our loves and comforts should increase/ Even as our days do grow (2.1.190-191)". This honest and simplistic love is more real and believable to the reader; the sentiment behind the words is as honest and simple as the phrase, unlike Othello's idealistic but superfluous words.

Othello is the image of perfection in a male dominated society. Othello is the heroic warrior. He has a magical heritage, foreign and as shadowy as his complexion in the Anglo-Saxon English community. Othello suffered innumerable obstacles growing up in the violent world of slavery and triumphing. He has led great armies in defending England. Othello is greater than man; he is half man and half myth. He can do no wrong in the eyes of his society. Unfortunately, this proves to be false and Othello falls from his pedestal into the pits of hell.

Othello is so insecure in his emotions and the sheer power of them, that when Iago feeds him a load of garbage regarding Desdemona's unfaithfulness he