

Hypothesis: Iago sabotages Othello's relationship with Desdemona because he is jealous of him.

After reading and studying William Shakespeare's classic story of Othello, I have concluded that Iago sabotaged Othello's relationship with Desdemona because he was jealous of him. While analysing different critics opinions and views on Iago's motives, I found many contrasting ideas and discovered that not all aligned with my initial hypothesis. Critics' opinions varied depending on time period. The three main critics and time periods I studied were A.C Bradley (1904), Leslie Y Rabkin & Jeffrey Brown (1997) and Sam Wood (2009). **These three critics all showed different views on Iago's motives and Othello and Desdemona's relationship in turn.**

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Sam Wood (2009) stated that the relationship between Othello and Desdemona may have been tainted from the very beginning because of the differences in their race and social stature when they married, saying that marriage is a "fiction that can be manipulated. Othello himself states, "Haply, for I am black and have not those soft parts of conversation" (Act III, Scene III) symbolising the perceived lack he felt as a result of his different race. The marriage also was also tainted with dislike from both sides of the families with Desdemona's father Brabantio especially stating when first told of the nuptials: "I pray you, hear me speak: /If she confess that she was half the wooer, /Destruction on my head, if my bad blame/ Light on the man!" (Act III, Scene iii). **This shows just a small sliver of the sort of abuse and discrimination that Othello and Desdemona faced when choosing to defy the unwritten laws of society at the time and wed. I believe that the strain from racial differences in this marriage could absolutely have affected its heinous undoing and that in the 16th century there was a lot more unwritten laws and expectations on what a person should be or who they should love than there are today. This is a very believable and logical explanation from Wood and I strongly agree that this affected how quickly mistrust and rumours impacted on Othello and Desdemona's marriage.**

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Further into the main body of the play it is obvious that Othello begins to distrust his wife Desdemona. **Wood states, "It is Othello's anxiety that Desdemona does not belong to him, or that the marital bond has been violated, that is the play's main theme".** Iago, Othello's jealous companion, does not help the situation with his sly comments and manipulative nature while convincing Othello that Desdemona may not have stayed loyal to him throughout their marriage, saying: She did deceive her father marrying you;/ And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,/ She lov'd them most. (Act III, Scene iii) **The argument Wood poses as to why Iago would want to break up the marriage between Othello and Desdemona was that he was a mainly motiveless villain and had no discernible reason for his actions.** This is a viewpoint not only held by Wood in the year 2009, but by many notable critics throughout history, showing that, in this instance, **era does not really matter when discussing Iago's motives.** He says that Iago "revels in his ability manipulate his victims" and that most people who study the play either deliberately avoid or just ignore the question of Iago's motives because it's such a grey area filled with speculation. Another point he makes concerning Iago's nature is that he is full of self hate, and does not have a clear grip on the sense of hierarchy or personality of many of the other characters in the play. Wood states "the suggestion [is] that Iago wants to put Othello and others in a similar position to his own while considering himself better than they". **This shows he is falsely believing himself 'above' Othello and considers it right to make him suffer.**

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Personally, although I agreed with his initial statement regarding the role of races in the play Othello, **I find it hard to agree with Wood (and many other well regarded critics) in this instance. I find it incomprehensible that a person would want to tear a happy marriage apart just for their own demise or because they contained a large amount of 'self hate'. Iago had to have had some sort of logical explanation for getting inside Othello's head and convincing him that his 'faithful' wife Desdemona was having an affair with one of Othello's closest companions; the honourable Cassio. I believe he was greatly jealous of Othello, and his marriage to Desdemona, and this is why he committed these unforgivable acts.**

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[Due to space restrictions, the content of the following five paragraphs has not been included]

Another view on Iago's reasoning is that he was blatantly a sadist ...

Their report goes on to state that Othello believes Iago easily because it is implied that Othello loves himself more than his wife Desdemona, ...

There is evidence within Rabkin and Brown's report to suggest that even though they believe that Iago is a sadist, there is proof that jealousy and sadism often go hand in hand ...

The most renowned and respected critic I looked at throughout this research was **A.C Bradley who wrote a critical analysis of Othello in 1904 stating that indeed Iago was jealous of Othello's life and felt the need to ruin many aspects of it because he wanted a sense of "power and superiority" over Othello.** This could be apparent because he had always worked and been under Othello in the social hierarchy. ...

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One of the first things Bradley references when beginning his article is the dramatic irony apparent in one of the lines from Act III, Scene iii ...

Bradley says that many renowned critics speak of Othello and accuse him for not suspecting Iago in the first place, but he believes there is no way that Othello could have ever know Iago's great jealousy claiming Othello "put entire confidence in the honesty of Iago, who had not only been his companion in arms, but, as he believed, had just proved his faithfulness in the matter of the marriage", expanding that Othello has no form of "stupidity" as many other critics may claim and that he saw Iago they same way "everyone else" in Venice at the time did (ibid).

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4 Out of all the motives that I have researched, I agree with A.C Bradley that Iago ruined Othello's marriage and life because he was undoubtedly jealous of him. After being looked over for the role of Othello's lieutenant and overshadowed by his friend Cassio I find it understandable that Iago would want to cause Othello pain and that this reason was the source of his jealousy. Although I believe that he was over the top with his methods and that the scale on which he hurt Othello was exaggerated, after reading Bradley's views and opinions on Iago I am able to feel some form of empathy towards him and find the initial idea of getting 'revenge' reasonable and plausible.

3 After summarising three critiques relating to the motives of Iago I have concluded that irrespective of time period, whether it be 1904 or 2009, there can be similarities found between critics views on character revelations. Sam Wood (2009) had views on race related anger felt by Othello that killed his marriage and allowed for Iago to easily intervene within his life. Leslie Y Rabkin and Jeffery Brown (1997) wrote of how Iago was an evil sadist and wanted Othello to suffer, while A.C Bradley said he was jealous of Othello and was angry about always being 'under' Othello in the social hierarchy. Interestingly the article from 1904 had a lot more in common with both the 2009 and 1997 ones than either of them did with each other, which shows that in this instance time period did not have a huge factor on the way Iago's motives are viewed and analysed. Bradley's article aligned the best with my hypothesis so from that I can conclude that I made a logical, plausible statement and that the reasoning behind Iago sabotaging Othello's relationship with Desdemona could very well have been because he was jealous of Othello.

Bibliography:

A.C Bradley (1904), Title: Lecture V: 'Othello', and 'Lecture VI: 'Othello', 'Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on 'Hamlet', 'Othello', 'King Lear', 'Macbeth'.' Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1904. p175-206. Source: [Shakespearean Criticism](#). Ed. Mark W. Scott. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale Research, 1987.
 Leslie Y Rabkin & Jeffery Brown (1997), 'Some Monster In His Thoughts: Sadism and Tragedy in Othello' Source: [Shakespearean Criticism](#). Ed. Dana Ramel Barnes. Vol. 35. Detroit: Gale Research, 1997. Publication Details: Literature and Psychology 23.2 (1973): p59-66.
 Wood, Sam (2009), Where Iago Lies: Home, Honesty and the Turk in Othello, Manchester Metropolitan University Source: [Early Modern Literary Studies](#). 14.3 (Jan. 2009)

Data evaluation chart [Note the data chart is an extract of the full chart]		
Source	Hypothesis: Iago sabotages Othello's relationship with Desdemona because he is jealous of him.	Evaluation
Wood, Sam (2009), Where Iago Lies: Home, Honesty and the Turk in Othello	"the question of his motivation has been either ignored or deliberately avoided. Such an approach risks stripping Iago of his humanity, and presents him as an improviser who "revels in his ability to manipulate his victims" for no discernible reason (Greenblatt 233) or a supernatural and diabolical force beyond the realms of humanity. In contrast to these arguments, this essay draws attention to the theme of home and honesty that runs through the play to suggest that Iago is, in fact, profoundly discomfited by his ability to manipulate his victims, and that we are able to find a motivation in this discomfort."	Relevance: High Reliable: Wood padded out his report with many other renowned critics opinions and views, quite reliable. Contradicted/Supported: Contradicted, believed Othello was motiveless. Contradicted other sources too. Contrasted time wise: Was good time gap between 1904 but only 9 years from 1997
Leslie Y Rabkin & Jeffery Brown (1997), 'Some Monster In His Thoughts: Sadism and Tragedy in Othello'	"Just as he may project his self-contempt onto others, the sadist can find relief from his conflicts by projecting his feelings of hopelessness, thus destroying the peace of others and killing their joys. ¹⁷ For seeing them as miserable as himself, by bringing others into his own world of suffering and self-contempt, his pain is assuaged. This is why Iago is driven to cause Othello to suffer through making <i>him</i> realize the discrepancies between <i>his</i> own false and true selves."	Relevance: Medium Reliable: Quite good, two different critics placing their opinions into one article, referenced others too. Contradicted/Supported: Both, supported and contradicted in aspects, slightly supported A.C Bradley too. Contrasted time wise: Yes with 1904, not as much with 1997.
A.C Bradley (1904), Title: Lecture V: 'Othello', and 'Lecture VI: 'Othello',	Bradley argues that Iago is impelled, not by a love of evil for its own sake, but to satisfy his "sense of power and superiority. Othello, we have seen, was trustful, and thorough in his trust. He put entire confidence in the honesty of Iago, who had not only been his companion in arms, but, as he believed, had just proved his faithfulness in the matter of the marriage. This confidence was misplaced, and we happen to know it; but it was no sign of stupidity in Othello. For his opinion of Iago was the opinion of practically everyone who knew him: and that opinion was that Iago was before all things 'honest,' his very faults being those of excess in honesty.	Relevance: High Reliable: High, A.C Bradley is a very well known critic that has a lot of respect and accuracy. Contrasted/Supported: Supported hypothesis fully Contrasting time wise: Yes, 1904 was well before 1997 and 2009.