

Estevan Balderrama

Ayesha Akbar

November 8, 2012

Question: What can *Othello* teach about jealousy and its psychology?

Works Cited

Buss, David M. "The Othello Syndrome." *The Dangerous Passion: Why Jealousy Is as Necessary as Love and Sex*. New York: Free, 2000. 73-100. Print.

As a scholarly book on the psychological aspects of jealousy, *The Dangerous Passion's* chapter on the condition of Othello Syndrome was useful in learning more about the influence *Othello* has had on the psychological understanding of jealousy. Othello Syndrome is a state of pathological jealousy, where the jealous person becomes consumed by their jealousy, which is often unfounded in reality.

Evans, Robert C. "Jealousy In Othello And Jealousy In Social Psychology: The Relevance Of Darwin?." *Journal Of The Wooden O Symposium* 2.(2002): 36. Academic Search Complete. Web. 7 Nov. 2013.

This article is a response to Dr. Buss's book on jealousy. Using the books information the Darwinian explanations for jealousy, Evans interprets the entire play from a psychological perspective. Evans was able to provide many explanations for Othello's actions in this manner and very clearly demonstrates the information on jealousy *Othello* has to offer.

Patterson, Michael. "Othello (The Tragoedy of Othello, The Moore of Venice)." *The Oxford Dictionary of Plays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 307-08. Print.

This reference book entry offers a brief summary of the plot of *Othello* while describing

various interpretations and critics of the play. The description of interpretations/ critics helps to understand how this play has been studied in the past and highlight some overlooked qualities of the play (how the timeframe of the play once Othello and Desdemona arrive on Cyprus is too short for Desdemona to have been able have any sort of affair at all).

Robert Evans uses Dr. David M. Buss's book, *The Dangerous Passion: Why Jealousy is as Necessary as Love and Sex* as a source for a Darwinist understanding of jealousy and its influence over human psychology. With this psychological understanding of jealousy, Evans offers a new explanation for Othello's actions throughout the play. Using new statistics on jealousy and its effects on human actions, Othello's sudden, rash, unreasonable, and murderous response to Desdemona's supposed affair becomes an almost expected human response to jealousy and an evolutionary/ cultural necessity as a way to save face and ensure that he will not accidentally raise another man's child. Although in his conclusion Evans argues that a strictly psychological interpretation of the play is over-simplistic and anachronistic, new and fascinating perspectives of the play are able formed by this interpretation.

My favorite reason for reading Shakespeare is the deep, complex, and deeply human characters he created. After reading *Othello* I was most impressed with Shakespeare's description of jealousy and its consequences. I wanted, however to make sure there were not any other important themes and ideas I had over looked. After searching the databases I found a brief reference entry on Othello that was useful in deciding to peruse the theme of jealousy from a psychological perspective. This led me to ask the question: what can *Othello* teach about jealousy and its psychology? Once I had a question I wanted answered I returned to the databases. I eventually found the Evans article, unfortunately the UT libraries did not have a copy and I had to use the interlibrary services, which was frustrating. Fortunately the article turned out to be the perfect answer to my question. Since the article heavily references Buss's book, I searched the library for a copy, and much of its information on jealousy helped me to better understand Othello as well. If I had to offer anyone advice it would be to start researching as soon as you can, you never know how long it will take or if you will have to make certain requests to get information, which can take more time as well.