

and even threaten the patriarchal norms and values in society, are causing their own deaths as Venetian husbands within the Jacobean period preferred asserting dominance over their wives in order to gain power and see women as non-threatening.

This presentation of Desdemona as the embodiment of innocent love and purity is made clear throughout the play, especially within Act 5 as she seems to be blinded by love despite Othello's clear hatred towards her after committing alleged infidelity. Desdemona's naivety is a significant factor towards her death as according to critic Marilyn French 'she is seen as a child' this is clear when she 'lies about the handkerchief and when Othello strikes her, she stands her ground with adult dignity, "I have not deserved this" thus displaying her youth being a barrier toward she marriage with Othello as she 'acts as a child' and remains so throughout the play. Desdemona's innocence leads her to her tragic death as she continues to believe Othello is not jealous and his unrequited love for her still remains, "His unkindness may defeat my life, but never taint my love" Desdemona's loyalty is evident here as she prioritises her love over herself however, this may be seen as childish and naïve as she clearly has no knowledge on love and marriage. This is reinforced by critic Carol Thomas who argues 'Emilia is a foil for Desdemona and corrects Desdemona's occasional naivete' demonstrating Desdemona's lack of understanding on why Othello is jealous thus leading her to die not only due to her naivety but her ignorance towards her husband's feelings. Her inability to understand Othello's harmful intentions towards her is evident towards the end of the play when Othello is has revealed his violent intentions, "Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight. Desdemona's realisation is significant as she finally steps out of the naïve, childish view of life and enters a world of maturity and understanding of the outcome for a woman to threaten a man's masculinity. However, she accepts her fate, highlighting her submissive traits as a woman and attempts to reason with him to delay her death.

However, Shakespeare also portrays Desdemona's innocence and role as a feminist as a positive factor as despite all that has happened to her, she remains loyal and virtuous toward all, including Othello. Her acts of independence and integrity attracts other female characters such as Emilia, who at the throughout the play quietly obeys Iago and remains submissive and loyal to him because of Jacobean norms and expectations of Venetian women to maintain their loyalty towards their husbands. Emilia becomes fond of Desdemona's 'heroic' acts such as asking Othello to return Cassio's position; thus, she becomes encouraged to do the same at the end of the play as a way to display her support towards Desdemona and give her justice. "If any wretch have put this in your head. Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse" This, however, also reinforces how women who challenge the patriarchal value of society are led to their deaths as after exposing and challenging Iago and his male dominance, Emilia is immediately killed by him, as a last show of Iago's masculinity as not being threatened by his wife, reinforcing his male pride.

Overall, Shakespeare's portrayal of Desdemona reinforces the act of oppression Venetian women receive due to being regarded as a possession by their fathers and husbands rather than as an equal which Othello fails to commit to within the play. Desdemona's sexuality cements her fate throughout the play.