

# Othello

Othello is a Moor, general of the Venetian army, that has to lead the Venetian fleet against the Turkish one in Cyprus. When the tragedy starts, Othello leaves Venice with Desdemona, married secretly, and with his Lieutenant Cassio.

When they arrive, they discover that the Turkish fleet was destroyed by a storm. His Ancient Iago tries to dismiss Cassio, with many means. With the unaware help of his wife, Emilia, Iago sends Cassio a precious handkerchief of Desdemona, convincing Othello of Desdemona's betrayal. Othello kills Desdemona in their marriage bed, because of his jealousy. In the end, Emilia shows that Desdemona's betrayal is an invention of her husband Iago. So Othello kills himself and Iago is arrested.



The painting depicts Desdemona with Othello in act of begging, trying to subside the anger prompted by a senseless jealousy. This is a superb example of academic processing of a Romantic subject. The contrived poses and sumptuous costumes of the figures recall the contemporary fashion of "tableaux vivants".



The dreamy character of the image draws musical analogies, according to the Symbolist Poetry's characters. The exotic setting chosen by Moreau moves the context of the tragedy from Venetian territories to a fabulous East.



Delacroix appears more impressed by Rossini's Opera, and so he usually creates an association of original text and lyrical elaboration. We can see on the background the figures of Othello and his friends that are present on the scene.