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# Othello (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series)



## Synopsis

In a period of ten years, Shakespeare wrote a series of tragedies that established him, by universal consent, in the front rank of the world's dramatists. Critics have praised either Hamlet or King Lear as the greatest of these; Ernst Honigmann, in the most significant edition of the play for a generation, asks: why not Othello? The third of the mature tragedies, it contains, as Honigmann persuasively demonstrates, perhaps the best plot, two of Shakespeare's most original characters, the most powerful scene in any of the plays, and poetry second to none. Honigmann's cogent and closely argued introduction outlines the reasons both for a reluctance to recognize the greatness of Othello and for the case against the play. This edition sheds new light on the text of the play as we have come to know it, and on our knowledge of its early history. Honigmann examines the thematic portrayal of feminism, morality, and otherness. He provides a general character criticism, but delves more deeply into Othello, Iago, Desdemona, and Emilia in individual sections. He discusses the play in performance and the relationship between reading it and seeing it. He also explores topics such as its date, sources, and the conundrum of "double time". Appendices cover date, details about and possible explanations for the textual inconsistencies, the principal and minor sources for the play, Edward Pudsey's extracts, and musical settings, reproduced from F.W. Sternfeld's *Music in Shakespearean Tragedy*. Finally, a reference section provides a list of abbreviations and references, a catalog of Shakespeare's works and works partly by Shakespeare, and citations for the modern productions mentioned in the text, other collated editions of his work, and other related reading. The Arden Shakespeare has developed a reputation as the pre-eminent critical edition of Shakespeare for its exceptional scholarship, reflected in the thoroughness of each volume. An introduction comprehensively contextualizes the play, chronicling the history and culture that surrounded and influenced Shakespeare at the time of its writing and performance, and closely surveying critical approaches to the work. Detailed appendices address problems like dating and casting, and analyze the differing Quarto and Folio sources. A full commentary by one or more of the play's foremost contemporary scholars illuminates the text, glossing unfamiliar terms and drawing from an abundance of research and expertise to explain allusions and significant background information. Highly informative and accessible, Arden offers the fullest experience of Shakespeare available to a reader.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

This edition is from the 3rd Arden Series and may have a more modern feel to readers than the previous series did. For example, modern scholars believe that Shakespeare's plays were performed without break between scene and act so this edition does away with the ACT I Scene 2 headings and instead merely inserts 1.2 in the text where the change occurs. There is a fine introductory essay that gives important cultural information to help the reader understand the moral climate in Venice in Shakespeare's time and the context of the play in the author's career and times. This edition has the many good notes one expects from Arden editions. The longer notes are moved to the back to avoid too great an interruption to the readability of the text. There is also music for the two songs in the play and an index. A fine edition that I am glad to own and refer to.

I have never intently read Shakespeare before, but enough people told me that I needed to read "Othello" that I decided to break down and buy a copy. Everything about Shakespeare I find intimidating, so with much trepidation did I buy this critical edition of "Othello". Needless to say, this work is AMAZING. Not only does Dr. Honigmann give notes along the way to help the reader interpret what the characters are saying, but he also provides an extensive introduction outlining Shakespeare's sources, some possible motives, and some character criticism. He also provides one of Shakespeare's main sources, a short story written by Giraldi Cinthio, and in this short story he provides notes that link it directly to the text of "Othello". I am completely sold on "The Arden Shakespeare" series, and will continue to use it in the future. A definite buy!

The play "Othello" is magnificent, and there are plenty of reviews to attest to that. This reviewer wants to point out greatness of the publisher and editor in this case (referring to the Arden Shakespeare). After buying Arden's "Henry V" publication a year ago, I have become a devout fan. I will never buy Shakespeare from another publisher. While these books may be slightly more expensive than a "mass market" edition, I believe that if you are going to take the time to read and understand Shakespeare, it is well worth the extra dollar or two. The Introduction, the images, and plethora of footnotes are irreplaceable and nearly necessary for a full understanding of the play (for those of us who are not scholars already). I recommend that you buy ALL of Shakespeare's work from Arden's critical editions.

I had to buy this book for my English class, but I really liked it. I had read the story before in high school, but this version was great for me at the university because it helped me understand things I wouldn't have gotten on my own. The play is annotated with explanations and definitions so that as you read it you can understand what it is you're reading. Experienced Shakespeare readers may not appreciate this as much as I did, but I think it is incredibly useful. Moreover, the foreword and the appendices are very informative! They contain a lot of historical and background information that is helpful when trying to understand the context of this play.

Shakespeare's play, "Othello" is usually recognized as one of his "great" tragedy's (with Hamlet, King Lear, and Macbeth). It certainly has a quite exciting plot and great poetry. If you have not yet had an opportunity to read this great work, I recommend it strongly. It is still an intelligent treatment of race, family and civic duty, and sex. It also has one of the most interesting bad guys around - Iago. I read it in the Arden edition, edited by Honigmann. Honigmann argues that Othello has a strong claim at being Shakespeare's greatest tragedy and makes a strong case for the work. He has a good introduction that gives a quite balanced and clear overview on many topics regarding this play, from the "double" time method Shakespeare uses, overviews of the various characters, as well as a stage history. Amazingly, he can be remarkably balanced, even when he is talking about his own views. While he is a decent writer, Shakespeare is better... In the text itself, he gives quite ample footnotes to help explain the language, why he picked particular readings, as well as where themes came from... Like all scholarly Shakespeare editions, the notes are in danger of overloading the text. This reader, however, recognizes the distance between myself and Shakespeare and so I find it comforting to be able to look at the notes when I have questions. At times his "longer notes" were awkward, but there is no easy way to handle this amount of material.

I have just completed a review of the Othello (Folger Shakespeare Library) in which I discuss how much my students enjoy and appreciate that edition. The Arden edition, however, is the one that I love. This edition is for me. The footnoting and explications are more abundant and detailed. What other reviewers have considered unnecessary, I consider interesting and provocative. Perhaps my students would have been distracted and, worse, discouraged by the extensive references but I use them for possible discussion points in class. In private, I relish almost all of it. It is also sturdy and the binding has yet to crack. Considering how often I refer to this edition, that's pretty remarkable!

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