

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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The Themes in Shakespeare

JEALOUSY

Neither jealousy nor guilt dominated, in Shakespeare's wide range of analyses of human themes—greed, desire, ambition for leadership and power, even indecisiveness—yet he excels in isolating the fragility of human ego in the face of innuendo and gossip.

OTHELLO Jealousy is the green eyed monster that destroys Othello, who, we are led to think, is a man of naturally noble and generous character, a military type at its best. Othello's lieutenant Iago is the evil genius who, actually for no reason that is given much importance in the play, decides to act on his native hatred of Othello. His actions, starting with his efforts to introduce Cassio into the Othello-Desdemona household, are directed at inspiring in Othello a sense that his wife has been fooling around with Cassio, and with other men. He succeeds, and in the end even Othello realizes that he has totally, and fatally, misjudged his wonderful wife.

KING JOHN There is one conspicuous and very consequential case of jealousy in the present play, that of the mother of Arthur, who believes (and is supported in this by the French king) that her son by Geoffrey II, brother to King John, is the legitimate heir to the British throne. Because she and her line have been illegitimately excluded from the British line, she is angry and jealous (of King John and his family) and prepared to launch a French army of her own, to reclaim her and her son's rights in England.