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Edited by Norman Sanders

OTHELLO



# THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE

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From the publication of the first volumes in 1984 the General Editor of the New Cambridge Shakespeare was Philip Brockbank and the Associate General Editors were Brian Gibbons and Robin Hood. From 1990 to 1994 the General Editor was Brian Gibbons and the Associate General Editors were A. R. Braunmuller and Robin Hood.

## OTHELLO

Professor Sanders provides a full analysis of the textual problem and theories of transmission of *Othello*, and offers possible solutions to the stylistic and racial problems which face modern readers and spectators. His edition includes contemporary maps of Venice and Cyprus, photographs of famous actors who have played the leading roles, and reconstructions of staging at the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres.

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# OTHELLO

Updated edition

*Edited by*

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## THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE

The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* succeeds *The New Shakespeare* which began publication in 1921 under the general editorship of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, and was completed in the 1960s, with the assistance of G. I. Duthie, Alice Walker, Peter Ure and J. C. Maxwell. *The New Shakespeare* itself followed upon *The Cambridge Shakespeare*, 1863-6, edited by W. G. Clark, J. Glover and W. A. Wright.

*The New Shakespeare* won high esteem both for its scholarship and for its design, but shifts of critical taste and insight, recent Shakespearean research, and a changing sense of what is important in our understanding of the plays, have made it necessary to re-edit and redesign, not merely to revise, the series.

The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* aims to be of value to a new generation of playgoers and readers who wish to enjoy fuller access to Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic art. While offering ample academic guidance, it reflects current critical interests and is more attentive than some earlier editions have been to the realisation of the plays on the stage, and to their social and cultural settings. The text of each play has been freshly edited, with textual data made available to those users who wish to know why and how one published text differs from another. Although modernised, the edition conserves forms that appear to be expressive and characteristically Shakespearean, and it does not attempt to disguise the fact that the plays were written in a language other than that of our own time.

Illustrations are usually integrated into the critical and historical discussion of the play and include some reconstructions of early performances by C. Walter Hodges. Some editors have also made use of the advice and experience of Maurice Daniels, for many years a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Each volume is addressed to the needs and problems of a particular text, and each therefore differs in style and emphasis from others in the series.

PHILIP BROCKBANK  
*General Editor*



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I am particularly grateful to the Mary Ellenberger Camp Foundation for the very concrete expression of confidence it has shown in my work. And as always my wife has worked with me on every aspect of the volume – quite literally in sickness and in health.

N.S.

*Knoxville, Tennessee*

# ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

## 1. Shakespeare's plays

The abbreviated titles of Shakespeare's plays have been modified from those used in the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. All quotations and line references to plays other than *Othello* are to G. Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1974, on which the *Concordance* is based.

<i>Ado</i>	<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
<i>AWW</i>	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
<i>AYLI</i>	<i>As You Like It</i>
<i>Cor.</i>	<i>Coriolanus</i>
<i>Cym.</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>
<i>Err.</i>	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
<i>Ham.</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>1H4</i>	<i>The First Part of King Henry the Fourth</i>
<i>2H4</i>	<i>The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth</i>
<i>H5</i>	<i>King Henry the Fifth</i>
<i>1H6</i>	<i>The First Part of King Henry the Sixth</i>
<i>2H6</i>	<i>The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth</i>
<i>3H6</i>	<i>The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth</i>
<i>H8</i>	<i>King Henry the Eighth</i>
<i>JC</i>	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>King John</i>
<i>LLL</i>	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>
<i>Lear</i>	<i>King Lear</i>
<i>Mac.</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
<i>MND</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
<i>MV</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
<i>Oth.</i>	<i>Othello</i>
<i>Per.</i>	<i>Pericles</i>
<i>R2</i>	<i>King Richard the Second</i>
<i>R3</i>	<i>King Richard the Third</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>Shr.</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
<i>STM</i>	<i>Sir Thomas More</i>
<i>Temp.</i>	<i>The Tempest</i>
<i>TGV</i>	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
<i>Tit.</i>	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
<i>TN</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
<i>TNK</i>	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>
<i>Tro.</i>	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>

*Wiv.*                    *The Merry Wives of Windsor*  
*WT*                     *The Winter's Tale*

## 2. Editions

- Cam.                    *The Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W. G. Clark, John Glover and W. A. Wright, 1863–6 (Cambridge Shakespeare)
- Capell                 *Mr William Shakespeare his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, ed. Edward Capell, 1768
- Delius                 *Shakesperes Werke*, ed. Nicolaus Delius, 1872
- Dyce                   *The Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Alexander Dyce, 1857
- Dyce<sup>2</sup>                  *The Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Alexander Dyce, 2nd edn, 1864–7
- Dyce<sup>3</sup>                  *The Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Alexander Dyce, 3rd edn, 1875–6
- F                        *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1623 (First Folio)
- F<sub>2</sub>                       *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1632 (Second Folio)
- F<sub>3</sub>                       *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1664 (Third Folio)
- F<sub>4</sub>                       *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1685 (Fourth Folio)
- Furness               *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Othello*, ed. H. H. Furness, 1886
- Hanmer                *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. Thomas Hanmer, 1744
- Hart                    *Othello*, ed. H. C. Hart, 1928 (Arden)
- Johnson             *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson, 1765
- Keightley            *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Thomas Keightley, 1864
- Knight                *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Charles Knight, 1841
- Malone                *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. Edmond Malone, 1790
- Malone Var.         *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. Edmond Malone [rev. J. Boswell], 1821
- Muir                   *Othello*, ed. Kenneth Muir, 1968 (New Penguin)
- NS                     *Othello*, ed. Alice Walker and J. Dover Wilson, 1957 (New Shakespeare)
- Pope                   *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. Alexander Pope, 1723
- Q<sub>1</sub>                     *The Tragædy of Othello, The Moore of Venice . . .*, 1622 (First Quarto)
- Q<sub>2</sub>                     *The Tragædy of Othello, The Moore of Venice . . .*, 1630 (Second Quarto)
- Ridley                *Othello*, ed. M. R. Ridley, 1958 (Arden)
- Rowe                  *The Works of Mr William Shakespear*, ed. Nicholas Rowe, 1709
- Steevens             *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 1773
- Steevens<sup>2</sup>            *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 2nd edn, 1778
- Steevens<sup>3</sup>            *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 4th edn, 1793
- Theobald            *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Lewis Theobald, 1733
- Warburton          *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. William Warburton, 1747

## 3. Other works, periodicals, general references

Abbott	E. A. Abbott, <i>A Shakespearian Grammar</i> , 1869 (references are to numbered paragraphs)
Bailey	Samuel Bailey, <i>On the Received Text of Shakespeare's Dramatic Writings and its Improvement</i> , 2 vols., 1862-6
Bullough	Geoffrey Bullough (ed.), <i>Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare</i> , 8 vols., 1957-75
Cinthio	Giraldi Cinthio, <i>Hecatommithi</i> (1566), Third Decade, Seventh Story; English translation in Bullough, VII, 239-52
conj.	conjecture
CQ	<i>The Critical Quarterly</i>
ELH	<i>ELH: A Journal of English Literary History</i>
ELR	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
Fortescue	J. W. Fortescue, <i>Shakespeare's England</i> , 2 vols., 1916, I, 132-3
Heath	Benjamin Heath, <i>Revisal of Shakespeare's Text</i> , 1765
Hulme	H. M. Hulme, <i>Explorations in Shakespeare's Language</i> , 1962
Jourdain	M. Jourdain, in <i>Transactions of the Philological Society</i> , 1860, p. 139
lit.	literally
McKerrow	R. B. McKerrow, <i>Printers' and Publishers' Devices in England and Scotland 1485-1640</i> , 1949
N&Q	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
Nicholson	Originator of textual conj. in Cam.
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
Onions	C. T. Onions, <i>A Shakespeare Glossary</i> , 1911; rev. edn, 1953
Partridge	Eric Partridge, <i>Shakespeare's Bawdy</i> , 1948
Pliny	Pliny, <i>Naturalis Historia</i> , trans. Philemon Holland (1601)
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
SB	<i>Studies in Bibliography</i>
Schmidt	Alexander Schmidt, <i>Shakespeare-Lexicon</i> , 2 vols., 1874-5
SD	stage direction
SEL	<i>Studies in English Literature</i>
SH	speech heading
SQ	<i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i>
S.St.	<i>Shakespeare Studies</i>
S.Sur.	<i>Shakespeare Survey</i>
subst.	substantively
Tilley	M. P. Tilley, <i>A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries</i> , 1950 (references are to numbered proverbs)
TLS	<i>The Times Literary Supplement</i>
Tollet	Originator of textual conj. in Furness
Upton	John Upton, <i>Critical Observations on Shakespeare</i> , 1746
Walker	see NS
Wilson	see NS



# INTRODUCTION

## Date

The earliest evidence of the date of *Othello* is the record of a performance at court found in the Accounts of the Master of the Revels of the time, Edmund Tilney, for the year 1604:

By the Kings Maiesties plaiers. Hallamas Day being the first of Nouembar. A play in the Banketinge house att Whithall called The Moor of Venis. Shaxberd.

This account book, discovered by Peter Cunningham, was obtained by the British Museum in 1868, and may well have been known to Edmund Malone, who in the notes to his edition of 1790 and in the Variorum edition of 1821 records that he had 'indisputable evidence' that the play was acted in 1604. Despite Malone's supporting testimony, the manuscript entry was suspected of being a forgery (by Richard Grant White and others in the nineteenth century and by Samuel Tannenbaum in the twentieth) until it was authenticated by A. E. Stamp in 1930.<sup>1</sup> During Shakespeare's lifetime the play was again performed at court in 1612/13 as part of the celebrations marking the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine; and it was acted publicly by the King's Men's company at the Globe Theatre in April 1610, and at Oxford in September of the same year. There were other early-seventeenth-century productions: at Blackfriars Theatre in November 1629 and May 1635, and at Hampton Court in December 1636.<sup>2</sup>

The play was first printed, in quarto format (Q1), by Nicholas Okes for Thomas Walkley who published it in 1622, having entered the title in the Stationers' Register on 6 October the previous year. A year later, in 1623, it was published with a fuller text in the First Folio (F), and again in quarto in 1630 (Q2). The present text is based upon both early editions, those readings being adopted which can be defended as the nearest to Shakespearean usage and intention.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence based upon probable sources used and on changes detected in Shakespeare's style during his career generally buttress the indication given by the Revels Accounts that the play was probably written *circa* 1602–4. It is fairly clear that some passages in the play were written under the influence of Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, which was published in 1601; and Shakespeare may also have relied upon Richard Knolles's *General History of the Turks* (1603) for details of the Venetian–Turkish wars found in 1.3, 2.1 and 2.2.<sup>4</sup> The metrical tests applied by F. G. Fleay and the tabulations of weak and light endings by J. K. Ingram, while

<sup>1</sup> *The Disputed Revels Documents*, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, 2 vols., 1930, II, 336, 343, 352, 353, and G. Tillotson, *TLS*, 20 July 1933, p. 494.

<sup>3</sup> See Textual Analysis, pp. 203–17 below.      <sup>4</sup> See below, p. 10.



not carrying the weight among modern scholars that they had in the nineteenth century, separately put the play at about the same period of Shakespeare's career.<sup>1</sup> A. Hart's detection of echoes from *Hamlet*, if not particularly persuasive, at least does nothing to affect a post-1602 dating; and the phrase 'more savage than a barbarous Moor', found in Dekker and Middleton's *Honest Whore*, Part One (after April 1604), 1.1.37 (ed. F. Bowers, 1955), while not specific enough to be a definite allusion to *Othello*, may be evidence of the play's existence and popularity.<sup>2</sup>

The possibility that Shakespeare's handling of some of his dramatic materials may be connected with royal tastes and interests may point to an early-Jacobean date. James I, who came to the throne in 1603, was known to be fascinated by Turkish history and had written a poem called *Lepanto*, which was published originally in 1591 and republished in England on his accession. There are many references to this poem by English writers at the time, including Ben Jonson and Knolles, whose *History* was dedicated to the king. It is possible that a play set among the events and naval actions which led ultimately to the Battle of Lepanto may have been written with an eye to the intellectual interests of the King's Men's new royal patron.<sup>3</sup> And it may be more than a coincidence that it was for the winter season's festivities of 1604 that Queen Anne desired Ben Jonson to devise a splendid masque specifically about Moors, which led to the mounting of *The Masque of Blackness*, in which she herself appeared in dusky make-up.<sup>4</sup>

There has been an enormous amount of discussion of Warburton's suggestion that the lines 'The hearts of old gave hands; / But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts' (3.4.42-3) are a topical allusion to the baronetage, the new titled order – ranking below peers and above knights – instituted by James I in 1611, which bears the red hand of Ulster as its badge. But the passage does not merit serious consideration as evidence for a late date for the play's composition; and it is impossible to accept as an interpolation made some eight years after the play's original writing.<sup>5</sup>

We may conclude, then, that *Othello* must have been written after 1601 and before autumn 1604, with late 1603 to early 1604 being the most likely time of its completion.

## Sources

The principal narrative source for the play was the seventh novella in the third decade of Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*. This collection of tales within a framework, first published in Venice in 1566, was used by a number of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists in their search for plots. The fact that it provided the source for *Measure*

<sup>1</sup> See Chambers, *Shakespeare*, 1, 255-69; and Furness, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> *TLS*, 10 October 1935, p. 631. As supporting evidence for a post-1601 dating E. Jones suggests that the name Othello may have been partly modelled on Thorello, a jealous husband in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), and that Brabantio's name and character may have been influenced by the Duke of Brabant in the anonymous play *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* (1600); see Jones, *Scenic Form in Shakespeare*, 1971, pp. 149-51.

<sup>3</sup> See E. Jones, 'Othello, Lepanto, and the Cyprus wars', *S.Sur.* 21 (1968), 47-52. *Macbeth* may also have been written with James's interests in mind – in that case Scotland and witchcraft.

<sup>4</sup> See M. Rosenberg, *The Masks of Othello*, 1961, p. 200.

<sup>5</sup> See Commentary at 3.4.42-3.

for *Measure*, which was also performed at court at the end of 1604, may suggest that Shakespeare had discovered its professional usefulness about this time. No sixteenth-century English translation of Cinthio's work has survived, although the book was known in England soon after its first publication;<sup>1</sup> and it is difficult to determine with any finality whether Shakespeare used the Italian original or the French translation of Gabriel Chappuys, published in his *Premier Volume des Gents Excellentes Nouvelles* (1584).

There are four verbal links that draw the play and the Italian version together. Othello's demand, 'Give me the ocular proof... Make me to see't' (3.3.361-5) is closer to Cinthio's 'se non mi fai... vedere co gli occhi' than to Chappuys's 'si tu ne me fais voir'. Q1's use of the unusual word 'acerbe' (F 'bitter') at 1.3.338 may be an echo of Cinthio's 'in acerbissimo odio'; just as Iago's gloating 'I do see you're moved' (3.3.219) is nearer to the Italian 'ch' ogni poco di cosa voi moue ad ira', where the French verb used is 'inciter'. Also, the unique Shakespearean usage 'molestation', describing the enchafed flood at 2.1.16, may have been influenced by Cinthio's Moor who speaks of the sea in a similar way in a passage omitted by Chappuys: 'ogni pericolo, che ci soprauenisse, mi recherebbe estreme molestia'.

Evidence that it was the French version Shakespeare used is of the same kind. The words 'if it touch not you, it comes near nobody' (4.1.187) seem to echo Chappuys's 'ce qui vous touche plus qu'à aucun autre', where the Italian verb is 'appartiene'; and Iago's emphasis on the importance of Cassio's 'gestures', as Othello spies on them in 4.1, is nearer to the French 'gestes' than the Italian 'atti'. Perhaps more substantial than these verbal similarities, however, is one of Chappuys's additions to the original text. In the lines of the play concerning Cassio's request that Bianca copy the embroidery of the handkerchief, the phrase 'take out the work' (or a variant of it) is used three times (3.3.298, 3.4.174, 4.1.145) – a sense of 'take out' found nowhere else in Shakespeare. No similar phrase occurs in Cinthio; but Chappuys adds to the Italian passage dealing with Cassio's decision the phrase 'tirer le patron' (copy the pattern).

In view of the evidence, therefore, one can only say that Shakespeare may have used Cinthio's original or Chappuys's translation or both of them, while making due allowance for the possibility of a no longer extant English translation based on them.<sup>2</sup>

Cinthio claimed that his tales were taken from real life, and although this is demonstrably not true of some of his stories, the stark realism of his narrative of the Moor and his Venetian wife has sent scholars to Italian history in the search for parallel tragedies of human jealousy. Most of those suggested do have details in common with the play, with one concerning a member of the Moro family, and another featuring a captain nicknamed 'Il Moro'; but none of them strikes one as necessarily having been in Shakespeare's mind at the time of the play's composition.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some stories were used by William Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-7), and Robert Greene used one story as a source for his play, *James the Fourth* (1590).

<sup>2</sup> For a full description of these details, see K. Muir, *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, 1977, pp. 182-96, and E. A. J. Honigmann, 'Othello, Chappuys, and Cinthio', *N&Q* 211 (1966), 136-7.

<sup>3</sup> For details of these, see Bullough, vii, 195-6.

Of the principal characters in Cinthio's story only Disdemona is named; Othello is called simply 'Capitano Moro' or 'Moro', Cassio is designated as a 'Capo di Squadra' (Captain or low-ranking officer), and Iago is an 'Alfiero' (Ensign or standard-bearer). The Moor is a distinguished soldier highly valued by the Signory of Venice, and Disdemona falls in love with him for his fine qualities and despite his looks. In defiance of her family's efforts to make her wed another man, she marries the Moor and they live happily in Venice for some time. When her husband is ordered to take command of the garrison in Cyprus, she pleads eagerly that she may accompany him; and despite his misgivings about the dangers of the voyage, the Moor allows her to sail with him in his command ship.

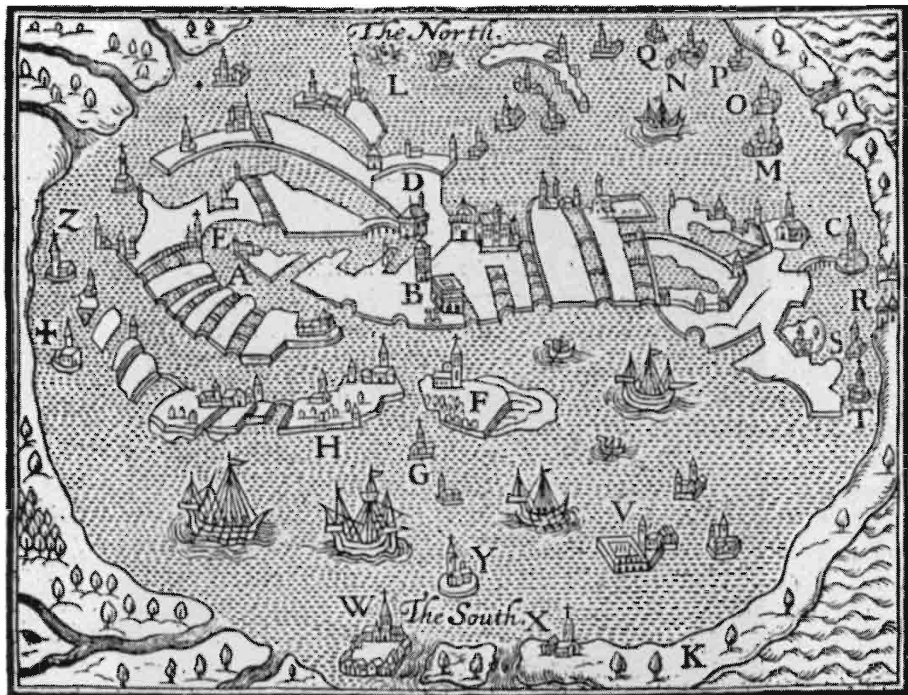
In Cyprus, as in Venice, Disdemona's best friend is the Ensign's wife, with whom she spends most of her time. The Ensign himself is high in the Moor's favour, although he is actually a villain with great skill in concealing his true nature beneath a manner that strikes everyone as being soldierly and noble. He passionately desires Disdemona, but is unable to woo her openly because of his fear of the Moor. When she gives no encouragement to his advances, he convinces himself that she is in love with the Captain, who is a great friend of the Moor and a frequent visitor to his house. He tries to formulate a plan by which he may satisfy the hatred he begins to feel for Disdemona in his disappointment; and he decides to accuse her of adultery with the Captain.

A chance to put this plan into action offers itself when the Captain wounds another soldier while on guard-duty and is dismissed by the Moor. Disdemona frequently begs her husband to reinstate the Captain, and the Ensign suggests to his commander that she is so importunate only because she has become disgusted with his looks and his black skin and is sexually attracted to the Captain. The Moor is deeply troubled by the Ensign's insinuations, and is so violently angry with his wife that she is afraid to persist with her intercession for the Captain.

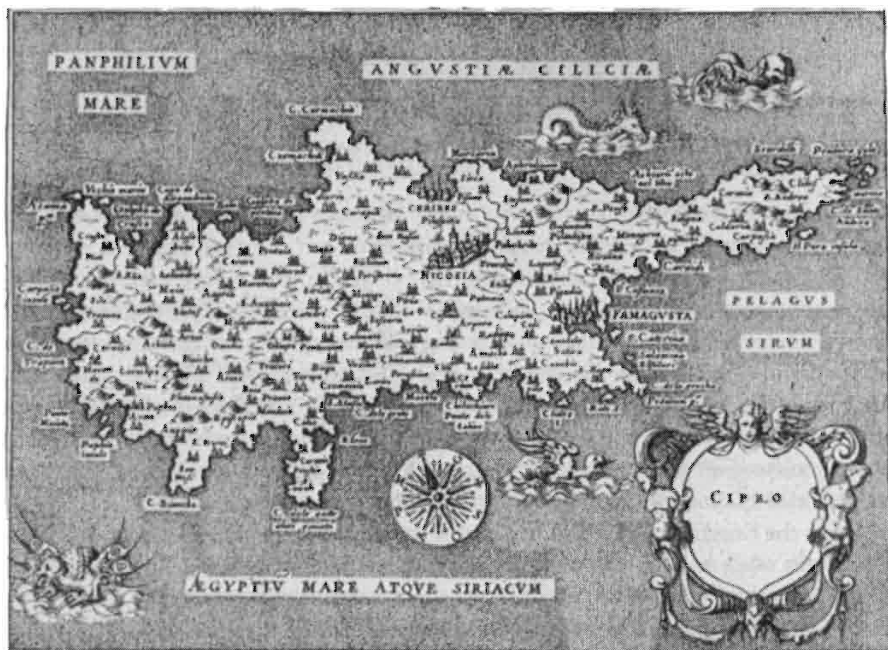
The Moor demands from the Ensign ocular proof of his wife's infidelity. So one day while Disdemona is visiting his wife and playing with his child, the Ensign steals from her girdle an embroidered handkerchief which was her husband's wedding gift to her, and drops it in the Captain's bedroom. The Captain, recognising it as Disdemona's property, goes to the Moor's house to return it; but finding the Moor at home and unwilling to risk his displeasure, he runs away. The Moor believes he recognised the Captain in the vicinity of the house and asks the Ensign to find out all he can about the Captain's relationship with Disdemona.

The Ensign arranges to talk with the Captain while the Moor can observe them but not hear what they are saying. During the conversation the Ensign acts as though he is amazed at what he is being told, and later tells the Moor that the Captain admitted to adultery with Disdemona and confessed that she had given him her handkerchief the last time they slept together.

When the Moor questions his wife about the loss of the handkerchief, she is so embarrassed in her behaviour and so confused in her attempts to find it that he takes her reactions to be a proof of her guilt. He becomes obsessed with the idea of killing his wife and the Captain; and he behaves so out of character that Disdemona confides



1a Map of Venice (1617)



1b Map of Cyprus (1590)



2a A Venetian officer (1609)

her troubles to the Ensign's wife, who knows all about her husband's plans but dare not speak about them because she is afraid of him.

The Captain has in his house a woman very skilled in embroidery who, recognising the handkerchief as Desdemona's, decides to copy the pattern before returning it. The Ensign spots the woman at this work sitting in her window, and so brings the Moor to see her that he may be convinced of his wife's guilt. At the Moor's request and after having been paid a large sum of money, the Ensign waylays the Captain on his way from a prostitute's house. However, he botches the murder attempt, succeeding only in cutting off his victim's leg.

The Moor first considers killing his wife by stabbing or poison; but finally works out with the Ensign a plan which will enable them to murder her and escape detection. One night while in bed with his wife he orders her to investigate a noise he has heard in the adjoining room. When she does so, the Ensign, who is hiding in a closet, beats her to death with a stocking filled with sand. In order to make the murder appear



2b The Duke (Doge) of Venice (1609)

to be an accident the two men effect the collapse of part of the ceiling on her body.

Soon after Disdemona's funeral, the Moor, distraught at her loss and repenting of his crime, cashiers the Ensign who thereupon tells the Captain that it was the Moor who attacked him. The Captain duly indicts the Moor before the Signory, who sentence him to be tortured. He persists in denying all knowledge of the crime and is released but banished from Venice. After some time, Disdemona's family have him murdered in exile. The Ensign later commits another crime for which he is imprisoned; and after his release he dies from the tortures inflicted on him during his incarceration.<sup>1</sup>

Even from this summary it is obvious that Shakespeare took a great deal from

<sup>1</sup> For a modern translation of Cinthio's tale, see Bullough, vii, 239–52.

Cinthio. The play like the story has two geographical locations: Venice, providing the social and military context in which the characters originate; and the garrisoned island of Cyprus where the principals are isolated and the personal tragedy develops. Cinthio's conception of the Ensign, with his convincing admirable exterior successfully concealing an enormous native evil, is expanded to become the most credible and frightening of Shakespeare's villains. The levels of affection between Othello, Desdemona and Cassio grow out of flat statements in the source. It is the Captain's cashiering that offers the Ensign his chance to sow the seeds of doubt in the Moor's mind. And in both play and tale it is the handkerchief that provides the crucial 'evidence' of adultery which precipitates the tragedy. Everywhere in Cinthio's narrative also one lights upon small details, words and ideas which are the germs of so many aspects of the play's totality.

More striking than such similarities, however, are the changes made by Shakespeare as he refashioned the tale. It is noticeable that there is no close following of the source in the first two acts. Rather the emphasis of the original is altered, new characters are created, and mere hints and phrases are developed into speeches and even parts of scenes. A sentence in Cinthio to the effect that Desdemona's family wished her to marry another man is the seed that produced Desdemona's noble birth, her elopement, and her distraught and racially prejudiced father – indeed much of the material contained in the first three scenes of the play. The *Capo di Squadra*, the well-loved visitor to the house of the Moor and Desdemona, becomes Cassio, Othello's best friend and companion in his wooing, whose promotion to lieutenant alienates the vicious Ensign. This addition to the source in turn gives Iago the professional and personal motivation for his hatred of Othello, which is far stronger than the sexual lust for Desdemona that drives Cinthio's character.<sup>1</sup> The need for the audience to plumb Iago's complicated and twisted psyche requires the creation of Roderigo, whose intimacy with the villain enables us to learn much that we may add to the information provided by his soliloquies. Perhaps most remarkable of all are the breathtaking addresses to the Senate by Othello and Desdemona which Shakespeare conjures out of one bald statement of the Italian original:

It happened that a virtuous Lady of wondrous beauty called Desdemona, impelled not by female appetite but by the Moor's good qualities, fell in love with him, and he, vanquished by the Lady's beauty and noble mind, likewise was enamoured of her.<sup>2</sup>

In the later acts of the play Cinthio's narrative line is followed much more closely; but significant changes are also made here. Iago, with Roderigo's help, plans Cassio's disgrace and dismissal specifically to further his plot against Othello. On Iago's advice Cassio actively solicits Desdemona's help for his reinstatement. The circumstances surrounding the handkerchief are deliberately changed: Cassio, unlike the Captain, is ignorant of Desdemona's ownership; Emilia, a waiting-woman rather than the intimate friend of the source, is innocent of any knowledge of her husband's designs and thus becomes an unwitting provider of the ocular proof. The Captain's

<sup>1</sup> But note the remnant of this in Iago's lines at 2.1.272–4.

<sup>2</sup> Bullough, vii, 242.

needlewoman and the prostitute he visits are combined in the play to become Bianca, Cassio's mistress; and the handkerchief itself is made to figure prominently in the overhearing scene. And, of course, the play's tragic ending is quite different from Cinthio's sequence of plotted murders, trials, imprisonments and torturings.

No such cataloguing of specific plot and character changes can convey the way in which the sordid story of Italian intrigues became the greatest domestic tragedy in the English language. For it takes no account of the immensely rich poetic texture, the means by which an exotic past impinges on the dramatic immediacy, the relentless emotional grip the play exercises upon the audience in the theatre, and the psychological accuracy with which the characters are conceived and the complexity with which they are imbued. Most of all it does nothing to account for the miracle by which Cinthio's Moor – 'a very gallant man... of great prudence and skilful energy' – becomes Othello, a character who contains such mighty oppositions that he stands second only to Hamlet in his capacity to provoke the widest critical disagreements.

Although Cinthio is the primary source, a number of other influences have been detected. The fourth story of Geoffrey Fenton's *Certain Tragical Discourses* (1567), which was translated from Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1561), contains in its tale of jealousy and murder details similar to those found in the play and not present in Cinthio. Don Spado, the Othello figure, has a spasm of physical frenzy resulting from his jealous obsession; and his tragedy is set against a background of the Turkish wars. His murder of his wife in their bedroom has a good deal in common with 5.2 of the play – such details as the maid's calling for help from neighbours who break into the room; the wife's revival and attempt to exonerate her husband; the final kiss; and the husband's suicide across the body of his wronged wife.<sup>1</sup>

In the earlier section of the play it is possible that Shakespeare also drew some details from the second tale of Barnabe Rich's *Farewell to Military Profession* (1581), which he had earlier used as a source for *Twelfth Night*. There are suggestive parallels between Rich and Shakespeare in the handling of such matters as the Christian ruler who must meet the alarming threats from the invading Turks and the storm which separates the defending fleet. But more interesting are the correspondences between Rich's story and 1.3 of the play, including the Duke's appointment of a famous military leader, the clandestine courtship of the general appointed, the pursuit of the revenge-bent father, the father's demand for justice, the senators' sympathy for the eloping couple, the summons of the daughter to give her own testimony, and the Duke's futile attempt to comfort the stricken father.<sup>2</sup>

In building up the character of his noble Moor Shakespeare may also have recalled items from his other reading. There are some interesting similarities between aspects of Othello's military and personal life and Plutarch's *Life of Cato Utican*.<sup>3</sup> In the story of Procris and Cephalus in George Pettie's *A Petite Palace of Pettie his Pleasure* (1576)

<sup>1</sup> P. N. Siegel, 'A new source for Othello?', *PMLA* 75 (1960), 480, and W. E. McCarron, 'Othello and Fenton: an addendum', *N&Q* 211 (1966), 137–8.

<sup>2</sup> See *Rich's Farewell to Military Profession*, ed. Thomas Cranfill, 1959, pp. 1–lii.

<sup>3</sup> W. Graves, *SQ* 24 (1973), 181–7.



he may have found the idea of a girl's being won by her lover's story-telling powers. There are some remarkable similarities between Othello's account of his adventures and the description of John Leo's career given by John Prory in the preface to his translation of Leo's *The History and Description of Africa* (1600).<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare also clearly used Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (1601) for some exotic allusions in Othello's speeches: the cannibals, anthropophagi, hollow caves, mines of sulphur, gum-dropping Arabian trees, chrysolite, mandragora, colloquintida; the movement of the Pontic and the Propontic and the Hellespont waters; and possibly his reply to Brabantio's charge of seducing his daughter by means of witchcraft.<sup>2</sup> The magical origin of Desdemona's handkerchief may be based on Ariosto's account of Cassandra's supernatural weaving in *Orlando Furioso*, 46, 64–5; and some persuasive verbal parallels have been adduced between the play and Apuleius's *Golden Ass*.<sup>3</sup>

Materials for the Venetian setting and the context of the Turkish wars Shakespeare drew from various sources. For information about the Venetian government and the city, he was apparently indebted to William Thomas's *History of Italy* (1549) and Lewes Lewkenor's translation *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* (1599) of G. Contarino's *De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum* (1543). The doubts about the strength of the Turkish forces expressed at the opening of 1.3 could have been suggested by more than one episode in Richard Knolles's *General History of the Turks* (1603) – to which we may also owe the presence of the mysterious 'Signior Angelo' at 1.3.16 as well as some details of the watch on the Cyprus cliffs in 2.1.<sup>4</sup>

### Othello's race

The dramatic emphasis placed on the racial difference between Othello and the other characters in the play is one of Shakespeare's most striking departures from Cinthio's tale. The very idea of the hero's alienation from his society is implicit in the subtitles of both Q1 and F texts; it appears in the choice of identification seized upon by the anonymous clerk who made the entry in the Revels Accounts; and it was at the heart of at least one playgoer's recollection of Burbage's portrayal of the 'grieved Moor'.<sup>5</sup> Yet despite the theme's obvious centrality in the play, there is no agreement about which race exactly it was that Shakespeare had in mind for Othello.

For Cinthio and his readers, as for the Venetians in the play, the spectacle of a foreign commander of Italian forces was nothing remarkable. Indeed, according to Contarino's study of the Republic,<sup>6</sup> by long custom the city 'held it a better course to defend their dominions upon the Continent with foreign mercenary soldiers, than with their homeborn citizens'; and there was even a law that ensured that the general of the army was always foreign born.<sup>7</sup> It is noticeable that it is no part of even Iago's

<sup>1</sup> L. Whitney, 'Did Shakespeare know Leo Africanus?', *PMLA* 37 (1922), 470–88.

<sup>2</sup> Muir, *Sources*, pp. 182–96.

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Tobin, 'Apuleius and the Bradleian tragedies', *S.Sur.* 31 (1978), 33–43.

<sup>4</sup> Bullough, VII, 211–14.

<sup>5</sup> *The Shakespeare Allusion-Book*, 2 vols., 1909, I, 272.

<sup>6</sup> See above.

<sup>7</sup> Bullough, VII, 235.

huge racial antagonism to Othello that his commanding officer is not a Venetian; and Brabantio, before the play begins, viewed the Moor only as a distinguished soldier and honoured guest. It is only when race is connected with miscegenation that it becomes a highly-charged emotional issue for the internationally-minded Venetians; and it was probably more so for the insular theatregoers of Jacobean England.

The origins of popular English knowledge of Africa and its inhabitants may be traced to *Mandeville's Travels*, which discussed such topics as racial characteristics and geographical locations of the varying degrees of blackness possible in the human race. By 1555, in books like Richard Eden's *Decades*, which included accounts of voyages to the dark continent, there were available first-hand descriptions of 'Moors, Moorens, or Negroes' and evidence that some could be of noble and even royal blood. And in 1601 Africans were to be seen in sufficient numbers in London for Queen Elizabeth to be 'discontented at the great numbers of Negars and blackamoors which are crept into the realm'.<sup>1</sup>

As the knowledge of the dark continent became more widespread, under the influence of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589), distinctions drawn between various African peoples were possible. For example, George Abbott, in *A Brief Description of the Whole World* (1599), separated 'blackish Moors' from 'exceedingly black Negroes... than whom no men are blacker'; and Leo Africanus underlined the difference with his 'white or tawny Moors' from the Mediterranean coast and the southern 'Negroes or black Moors'.<sup>2</sup> That Shakespeare was aware of such distinctions as these is obvious from the stage direction to 2.1 of *The Merchant of Venice*, which signals the entrance of the Prince of Morocco as 'a tawny Moor all in white'. Also, like his fellow Londoners, he could compare visually the 'Negars and blackamoors', which so troubled the queen, with the sixteen members of the embassy from Barbary who, led by Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud, were in the city between August 1600 and February of the following year. During their stay, their dress, customs and behaviour caused a scandal which must have caught the attention of all Londoners; and there is still extant the official portrait of the ambassador himself, showing a bearded, hawk-faced, cunning Arab complete with turban, flowing robes, and elaborately ornamented scimitar (illustration 3a).<sup>3</sup>

The only other Moor in Shakespeare's works is Aaron, the villain in *Titus Andronicus*, who is clearly conceived as a woolly-haired, thick-lipped 'coal-black Moor' (3.2.78) in the play, and is represented as such in Henry Peacham's drawing of a sixteenth-century production of it.<sup>4</sup> Aaron too is apparently aware of colour differences, for he explicitly remarks on the tawny hue of the child he has fathered on the white empress Tamora, 'half me and half thy dame' (5.1.27).

The evidence for the kind of Moor Othello is in the play is far more difficult to interpret; and this has led to the widely different costumes and make-up that actors have adopted for the role (illustrations 7 and 8).<sup>5</sup> At first sight the references to his colour seem straightforward, with the words of many of the characters being very

<sup>1</sup> See E. Jones, *Othello's Countrymen*, 1965, pp. 1-26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See B. Harris, 'A portrait of a Moor', *S.Sur.* 11 (1958), 89-97.

<sup>4</sup> See *S.Sur.* 1 (1948), 17-22 and Plate 1.

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 40-7 below.



3a Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud ben Mohammed Anoun, Moorish Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth (1600–1)

specific for us today. The Duke assures Brabantio that his ‘son-in-law is far more fair than black’ (1.3.286); Iago toasts the health of the ‘black Othello’ (2.3.27); Brabantio finds it incredible that his daughter would cleave to a ‘sooty bosom’ (1.2.70); Emilia, rising to the defence of her mistress, sees the Moor as a ‘blacker devil’ (5.2.132); and Othello himself laments, ‘haply for I am black’ (3.3.265) and sees Desdemona’s supposedly besmirched honour as being ‘begrimed and black’ as his own face (3.3.388–9). But we know that Shakespeare did use the word ‘black’ to mean ‘brunette’ (as opposed to ‘blonde’) or merely ‘dark-complexioned’ (as opposed to ‘fair-skinned, not sun-tanned’), usually in an uncomplimentary sense; though it should be noted that, of some fifty-six occasions on which he uses the word, in only about seven does it have this connotation.

All of the other indications of Othello’s race amount to an awareness that his



3b Frontispiece to *Othello* in Nicholas Rowe's edition of Shakespeare's works (1709)

features are strikingly at odds with white Venetian standards of good looks. To the jealous rival, Roderigo, he is a 'thick-lips' (1.1.67); he is a 'devil' to Emilia (5.2.132); Iago envisions him as 'an old black ram' (1.1.89), and as someone at whom the typical Venetian gorge heaves with disrelish (2.1.221–2). Desdemona herself feels obliged to account for her rejection of the racial norms of appearance in her choice of a husband by telling the Senate that she 'saw Othello's visage in his mind' (1.3.248); even as one element in her father's disbelief is the conviction that her nature could not err so preposterously as to wed 'what she feared to look on' (1.3.98). Perhaps most surprisingly of all, Iago, believing sincerely that Desdemona must grow to see that her husband is defective in loveliness of favour (2.1.218–20), is actually able to get Othello to accept without demur that it proves her unnatural that she refused 'many proposèd matches/Of her own clime, complexion, and degree' (3.3.231–2), in order to wed someone whose looks made her shake with fear (3.3.209).

For the modern reader all of these indications of colour and race would almost certainly point to a Negro; but for the seventeenth-century Londoner they could apply equally well to an Arab. Iago's derogatory comparison of Othello to a 'Barbary horse' (1.1.111-12) would not be taken by any member of the Blackfriars audience to be other than to an Arabian steed; and his scornful use of the term 'barbarian' (1.3.343) is exactly that used by Elizabeth's courtiers to refer to Abd el-Ouahed and his entourage.<sup>1</sup> Even in the lie he tells Roderigo about Othello's demotion, it is Mauritania (i.e. the land of the Moors) he selects for the imaginary posting (4.2.217). More generally, it was the north African races that were popularly associated with the kinds of reactions that Othello manifests in the play: as Leo Africanus writes of the Moors of Barbary,

No nation in the world is so subject unto jealousy; for they will rather lose their lives, than put up any disgrace in the behalf of their women.<sup>2</sup>

There is, then, no way of saying with absolute certainty how Shakespeare conceived Othello racially. A black/white opposition is clearly built into the play at every level: factually, physically, visually, poetically, psychologically, symbolically, morally and religiously. This is ultimately the only important theatrical fact. And being so, it is probably true that, regardless of how such an effect could have been created on the Jacobean stage, only a Negroid Othello can produce the desired responses in the theatres of the Western world, at present and in the foreseeable future.

### The plot and its inconsistencies

Shakespeare's dramatic fashioning of Cinthio's story has long raised problems of interpretation because of the large number of inconsistencies between what is said or implied in some parts of the play and information given on the same subjects at others. In *Othello*, these cannot be put down to a characteristic untidiness about detail to which we attribute such things as the conflicting evidence of Hamlet's age or the apparent confusion about Viola's musical role in *Twelfth Night*. Rather they are an integral part of any understanding of the theme of marital jealousy and the psychological credibility of the characters and their actions.

As long ago as 1850 John Wilson ('Christopher North') pointed out the discrepancies caused by Shakespeare's management of time in the play,<sup>3</sup> and developed his theory of the 'double-time scheme'. The first two acts present us with no difficulties in this regard. Indeed Act 1 dramatises events that require little more time than they would do to act on the stage. The opening scene is almost exact in its equation of stage time and 'real' time. Iago's trip from Brabantio's house to seek Othello at the Sagittary is covered adequately by the exchanges following his exit at line 159; just as the time taken by Brabantio to rouse his kindred and follow Iago is represented on stage by the first 54 lines of 1.2. In a similar way the discussion of the intentions of the Turkish

<sup>1</sup> e.g. John Chamberlain and Dudley Carleton in Harris, 'A portrait of a Moor', p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Bullough, vii, 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Blackwood's Magazine*, November 1849; April and May 1850.

fleet by the senators in the opening lines of 1.3 account for the time taken by Othello and Brabantio to move from the Sagittary to the council chamber. In fact, the only obvious theatrical telescoping Shakespeare employs is in making Othello's speech describing his wooing equal the time taken by Iago to fetch Desdemona from the inn. However, even here the leisurely narrative movement of the lines, and their convincing poetic evocation of years passed and their geographical spread endow them with a theatrical length far in excess of the two minutes they take to deliver.

The length of the interval between Acts 1 and 2 is whatever it took to sail from Venice to Cyprus, and the opening alarms and arrivals leading up to the entrance of Othello at 2.1.173 credibly convey the division of the ships by the storm and their staggered making of landfall. The guard is mounted and Cassio is made drunk and cashiered during the same night. The next morning he petitions Desdemona, Iago begins his temptation of Othello, and the deaths of the supposedly guilty lovers are plotted.

It is possible to imagine a break in the action between Acts 3 and 4, but we receive a powerful theatrical impression that 4.1 is practically a continuation of 3.3. From the beginning of Act 4 to the end of the play the action is continuous. Lodovico arrives from Venice and is invited to dinner the same evening; and it is immediately after this, between midnight and one o'clock, that Roderigo waylays Cassio and meets his own death at Iago's hands. The events leading to the catastrophe in the bedroom follow without a break.

All of the specific references to the passage of time in the text are reinforced by the strong sense of fast movement as events crowd on each other. We recognise subconsciously that Othello's irrational descent into jealous obsession must be one continuous sweep, even as Iago himself is aware that one moment's pause for thought might lead the Moor to 'unfold' him to Cassio (5.1.20-1) and that the epileptic fit is but a fortunate occurrence out of his control which prevents the confrontation that could wreck his plans.

At odds with this impression of speed are a large number of allusions which imply that the events we witness on stage are happening over a much longer spread of time. For example, Emilia assures us that Iago has implored her to steal Desdemona's handkerchief 'a hundred times' (3.3.294-5); Othello's torment seems to be based upon the thought of Desdemona's many 'stolen hours of lust' (3.3.339) and his own many nights of ignorance (3.3.340-2). Iago's account of his night spent with Cassio, although fictitious, needs time to have happened in order to be credible (3.3.414). Emilia and Desdemona both speak as though the marriage took place some time ago: 'Tis not a year or two shows us a man. . . . Nay, we must think men are not gods, / Nor of them look for such observancy / As fits the bridal' (3.4.97-144). The way Othello questions Emilia about her mistress's doings (4.2.1-10), his conviction that his wife has committed 'the act of shame / A thousand times' (5.2.210-11), and his report of seeing Desdemona at her bedtime prayers (4.2.22) all suggest a longer experience of married life than that allowed by the play. Bianca's reproaches to Cassio for his long absence are more specific: 'What! Keep a week away? Seven days and nights?' (3.4.167); and the treatment of their relationship generally suggests that it was of long

standing. Finally, the disappearance of the Turkish threat to Cyprus, the informing of the Venetian Senate, the decision to replace Othello with Cassio, and Lodovico's diplomatic mission all require more time than the play supplies.

John Wilson's explanation of this temporal confusion was that Shakespeare was working with two time-schemes: 'short time' which depicts the actions taking place on stage as an unbroken sequence of events; and simultaneously the provision of sufficient indications to set them in a larger context which reminds the audience of 'longer time'. This double-time scheme was proof to Wilson and to many subsequent scholars of Shakespeare's dramaturgical mastery in adapting Cinthio's more leisurely narrative for the stage. As such it was to be placed alongside the brilliant transformation of the lengthy trials, imprisonments and drawn-out deaths of the source into the tragic concentration of the two final scenes of the play.

It is, however, not possible to consider the inconsistencies of time on their own; they are clearly connected with many contradictions in other aspects of the play. The character of Cassio is something of a puzzle. At 1.1.21 he is said to be a man 'almost damned in a fair wife', while in Acts 3-5 he is depicted as a sexually active bachelor. At 1.2.51-2 he appears to be completely ignorant of Othello's interest in Desdemona, whereas later we are informed that he went wooing with his captain (3.3.70-1) and was very often a go-between for them (3.3.95-9). And his elevation to the governorship of Cyprus from his status as disgraced and cashiered officer strikes one as odd sometimes even in performance. There is a similar uncertainty about Roderigo. In 1.1 he is quite clearly a well-known, if unwelcome, suitor for Desdemona's hand and is therefore presumably one of the 'wealthy curled darlings' of Venice whom she rejected for Othello. Yet later he threatens Iago that he will make himself known to her (4.2.193-5) in order to claim back the jewels he seems to have been giving Iago for her over a long period of time.

Ned B. Allen<sup>1</sup> has drawn together all of the inconsistencies in the play and argued that they are the result of Shakespeare's having written the play in two parts: first Acts 3-5, where he followed Cinthio closely and took over the long time-span of the tale; and later Acts 1-2, in the composition of which he recalled the details of the source far less accurately, intending to revise the later acts so that they would coincide with the earlier ones but not managing to do so. While Allen's marshalling of his evidence is exemplary, he does play down some of the connections between the play's 'two parts', and there is no real pointer that the acts were written in the order he suggests. We know that Shakespeare did revise the play;<sup>2</sup> and it is hard to believe that he would have allowed the inconsistencies to stand if he had thought that they would seriously affect its theatrical impact.

We cannot remind ourselves too frequently that the play does work in the theatre - indeed, that it is notorious for its power to make audiences lose control of themselves. This being so, we should perhaps give less weight to the study-produced 'problems' of the play. The kind of minutely accurate dovetailing of theatrical plots we have been trained to expect since the eighteenth century sometimes makes the

<sup>1</sup> 'The two parts of *Othello*', *S.Sur.* 21 (1968), 13-29.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Textual Analysis', pp. 211-15 below.

modern mind dissatisfied with some aspects of Renaissance drama: the widely allusive exploration of a dramatic idea, the frequent loose ends, and fierce concentration on the truth of the immediate moment. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare often worked using large impressionistic effects and his delving into the depths of the human spirit always recognises the futility of any effort to pluck out its mystery completely.

When he addressed himself to the topic of sexual jealousy, he knew he was entering a realm where reason has no place, where concepts like evidence, ocular proof, observable fact, and demonstrable truth are merely pathetic echoes from a hoped-for world of Baconian clarity. The plot of *Othello*, with all its inconsistencies, its lack of perfect orderliness, its blurring of chronological time, and its frightening picture of a mind defining existence in terms of its twisted ideals, is the perfect vehicle for conveying the experience of obsessive jealousy. Any attempt to impose intellectual neatness on the play's distillation of raw passion in action leads to a denial of the profundity of its truth – and to an imitation of Iago, the blinkered rationalist and failed playmaker.

### The play and its critics

During the seventeenth century *Othello* was one of the most frequently performed of Shakespeare's plays, and, if we are to judge from the number of allusions to it, one of the most highly esteemed.<sup>1</sup> Its power clearly fascinated other dramatists, for John Webster, Francis Beaumont, John Ford, Philip Massinger and John Fletcher all imitated its effects in their own work. From the Restoration to the present day it has had an unbroken stage history, never suffering from the cycles of popularity and neglect that have been the fate of other plays in the Shakespeare canon. The two main roles have always offered actors of very different kinds irresistible challenges to their art, and the play has exercised on theatre audiences a uniquely powerful impact obviously based on a deeply-felt involvement with the characters and their relationships. From the tears shed by the Oxford audience at Burbage's performance to the pretty lady who sat next to Pepys and cried out to see Desdemona smothered, from the fainting ladies of Betterton's productions to the Victorian playgoer who loudly urged Macready to 'choke the devil!', the play's theatrical grip has never been less than remarkable.

The setting undoubtedly played its part in the original success. For Shakespeare's contemporaries Italy had long possessed a double image. It was the land of romance, pleasure and refinement; the country of Ariosto, Petrarch and Castiglione; the Renaissance model for less civilised northern lands. It was also the sump of sophisticated vice, the birthplace of the atheistic politician Machiavelli, a country made up of the courts of vicious princelings where poisoning, whoredom and sodomy abounded. Venice of all Italian cities was almost a type-name for the commercial republic, raised to grandeur on dynamic, international and unscrupulous capitalism. It was the free state of Europe, a racial and religious melting-pot which had

<sup>1</sup> See G. E. Bentley, *Shakespeare and Jonson*, 1945, p. 113–14.



successfully challenged the great European monarchies, and which gazed in two directions: towards civilised Christianity and towards the remote eastern world of pagan infidels, the Turks, and the mighty power of Islam. As William Shute,<sup>1</sup> the English translator of the first history of Venice put it,

Italy is the face of Europe; Venice the eye of Italy. It is not only the fairest but the strongest and activest part of that beautiful and powerful nation.

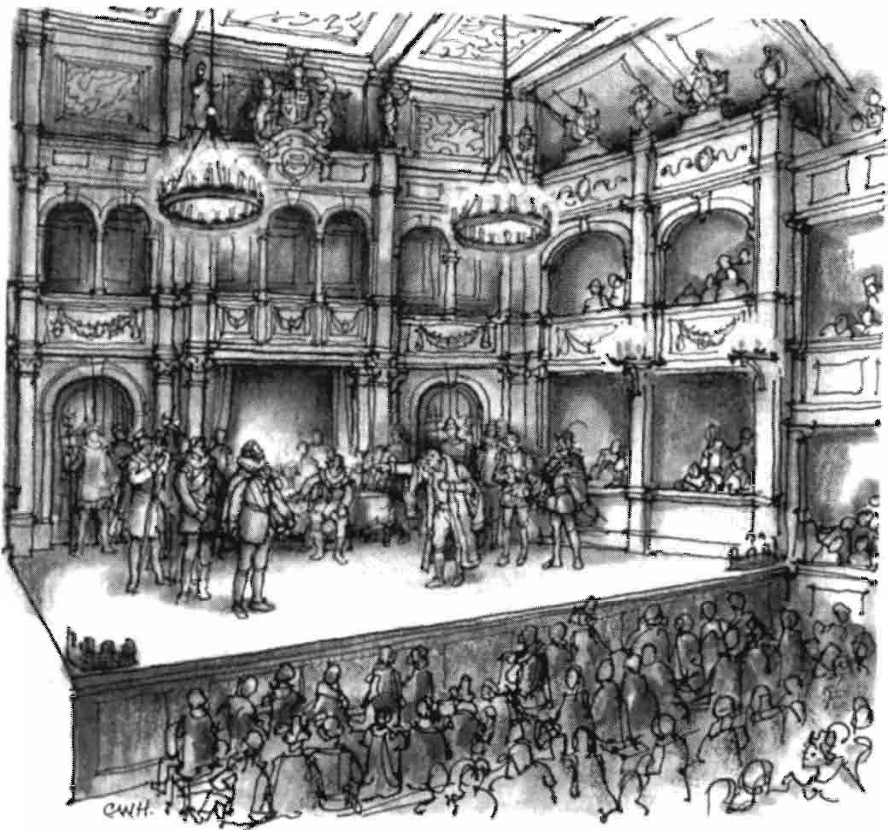
But as such it was also the exemplar of all those exotic vices against which men as unlike as Thomas Nashe and Roger Ascham warned the youth of England.

Around 1599 there had developed a craze for drama with an Italian setting; and for Jacobean theatregoers Italy had become almost the accepted site of the more sensational tragedies of the period. John Marston in his *Antonio and Mellida* (c. 1599) was perhaps the first to see its possibilities; but they were soon explored in plays such as Webster's *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. And, of course, Shakespeare himself five years before writing *Othello* had availed himself of a Venetian locale for *The Merchant of Venice*, the comedy of his other great outsider, Shylock the Jew.

Shakespeare could therefore rely upon the ready acceptance by his audience of Venice as an appropriate place for his story of an exotic Moorish general, a Turkish invasion threat, a poisonous Machiavellian villain, an irate whore, powerful magnificoes, a carpet knight and a courtly lieutenant, with its hints of witchcraft and magic, and its violence, cruelty and sexual passion. The fact that the hero was a Moor would have had some additional associations for the Blackfriars playgoers. They would have had an automatic insular distrust of the alien, would have made the connection, natural to an Englishman of the time, between him and barbarism, and would have linked him vaguely with magic, lewdness and proneness to jealousy. If Burbage did play the role as Negroid, then he may well have been viewed initially as 'of all that bears man's shape, likest a devil', a creature 'fearful in sight and bearing'. Yet, even though Shakespeare availed himself of such racial, historical and geographical associations, he in no way simply adopted them. In fact, it is the ways in which he manipulated them for his own tragic purposes that in part give the play its extraordinary grip on audiences.

It is noticeable that every effort is made to circumscribe the effects and implications of the characters' actions. For example, while Venice and its political importance provide the credible seed-bed of the tragedy, the actual working-out of the situation takes place in Cyprus. This shift from the great influential commercial city to a beleaguered Mediterranean island is motivated on the narrative level by the continuing Christian crusade against the Turks; but this matter is hurried from the audience's attention in a couple of scenes. Its dramatic value lies largely in enabling Shakespeare to have the ideal conditions for his domestic drama. The new wife is thereby isolated from the family and friends she has alienated by her choice of a husband, who himself is busy with a command that makes him responsible for the welfare of others. The villainous ancient is moving in the world of military campaign

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in J. R. Brown, *Shakespeare in Performance*, 1973, p. 292.



4 A possible staging of Act 1, Scene 3, as at the Blackfriars Theatre, by C. Walter Hodges. *Brabantio*: Here is the man: this Moor. See p. 201 below

that is most familiar and congenial to him. These are the conditions that give believability to such things as Iago's management of Cassio's disgrace among soldiers celebrating a recent escape from battle but remaining edgy about its still-felt threat; and to a middle-aged general's reactions to the familiar circumstances of his profession complicated by the presence of a woman he views as its crowning glory.

This geographical narrowing of focus is reinforced by the absence of the allusive widening of scope normally present in Shakespearean tragedy. There is no metaphorical creation of a surrounding universe. There is no choral commentary to give a context to the lovers' fate such as we find in *Romeo and Juliet*, no vast world history that affects and is affected by the doings of an Egyptian queen and one of the triple pillars of Rome as in *Antony and Cleopatra*. We find no rich pattern of reference to an other-world like that provided by the witches in *Macbeth*, or the ghosts in *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Richard III*, or by the easy conjuring of elemental gods in *King Lear*. And despite the Turkish invasion and the Venetian origin of the action, there is established no vital connection between private decision and public event such as that made by

Fortinbras's presence in *Hamlet* or the Volscian–Roman conflict in *Coriolanus*. As A. C. Bradley puts it: 'Othello has not... the power of dilating the imagination by vague suggestions of huge universal powers working in the world of individual fate and passion.'<sup>1</sup>

The whole movement of the action is that of a narrowing gyre. After 2.2 the people of Cyprus are forgotten; and by Act 4 the doings of the great world have become so distant from Othello's concerns that he hardly reads the dispatch from the Senate, for there can be no real competition between the orders of his Venetian masters and his obsessive desire to hear Desdemona's conversation. In fact, the last three acts make us concentrate on a purely personal world created by Iago and Othello until we are locked physically and symbolically into the claustrophobic bedroom–tomb of the doomed pair.

The hero's mental path contributes to this sense of contraction. The breadth of his character and the scope of his imagination shrink to a single obsession which usurps the government of his whole being. Moreover, this state is arrived at not by voluntary action but by a robot-like response to another's suggestions. Alone among the tragic heroes, Othello is a patient rather than an agent, worked on by forces outside himself, as total a victim of deception as any character in the Shakespearean canon.

It is the ending of the play that separates it most strikingly from the other tragedies. In the first place, there is no emphatic re-establishment of public order such as Malcolm's prognostication of a healthier Scotland after Macbeth's death, or the powerful entrance of Fortinbras as Hamlet's heir, or even the gesture of picking up the pieces by Albany and Edgar after Lear's purgatory. The tragic loading of Othello's bed does not affect anyone, Venetian or Cypriot. All we hear is Gratiano's arrangements for Desdemona's estate, with Cassio's lip-service remark, 'For he was great of heart', standing for the final panegyric that other tragic heroes receive. The real emphasis is on the punishment of the villain; there is no effort to understand the nature of the catastrophe, no attempt to ritualise the hero's end. The impulse of the finale is the very human one of personal dissociation from the inexplicable pain of other people's lives – let the curtains be drawn round the bed, for the object poisons sight.

Such features of the work as these have led many critics to find the nature of its tragic vision indefinable, so that there is no consensus of opinion whatever. At one end of the scale we find Granville-Barker's<sup>2</sup> claim that it is 'a tragedy without meaning', and at the other G. R. Elliott's<sup>3</sup> eulogy: 'Othello is... surely the world's supreme *secular* poem of "human love divine".' Between these two extremes lie innumerable variants of them; but even the most adulatory are haunted by the idea that in some way or another we are dealing with a masterpiece *manqué*, whose very perfection of form and theatrical effectiveness make it a lesser artistic experience than its great competitors.

The critical dissatisfaction with the play as a whole may be represented by the two

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1904 (1941 edn), p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, fourth ser., 1946 (1978 edn), p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> *Flaming Minister*, 1953, p. xxxiv.

main views of the hero himself, which interestingly reflect the two main stage Othellos to one or other of which actors seem naturally drawn. The first of these – the traditional – is the heroically noble soldier-lover calling for an admiration and sympathy that survive the hideous descent into cruelty and violence. Dr Johnson summed up well the qualities that so many writers have seen in this Moor and elaborated with great subtlety: ‘magnanimous, artless, and credulous, boundless in his confidence, ardent in his affection, inflexible in his resolution, and obdurate in his revenge’.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most unreservedly committed exponent of this view is J. Dover Wilson.<sup>2</sup> He believes, as Coleridge put it, that natural inclination to jealousy is not the main point of Othello’s character; it is

rather an agony that the creature, whom he had believed angelic, with whom he had garnered up his heart and whom he could not help still loving, should be proved impure and worthless. It was the struggle *not* to love her. It was a moral indignation and regret that virtue should so fall.<sup>3</sup>

This is what makes him ‘one of the great lovers in the literature of the world, the greatest lover in Shakespeare’.<sup>4</sup>

The quality of love that has stirred critics to such encomia is seen to be one of a rare sublimity. In it there is a perfect balance of the spiritual and the physical. Desdemona’s appreciation of her husband’s mind is coupled with her desire to experience those rites for which she married him (although some of the more old-maidish of these critics do find these desires, apparently permissible in the fourteen-year-old Juliet, difficult to accept in a young Venetian noblewoman). Othello’s palpable physical delight is similarly blended with his enjoyment of his wife’s ‘conversation’ and his recognition that the value of his whole life and even the universe itself finds its incarnation in her. The very sight of her after the small death of their parting can produce a perfect ecstasy in him:

It gives me wonder great as my content  
To see you here before me. O, my soul’s joy . . .

If it were now to die,  
’Twere now to be most happy; for I fear  
My soul hath her content so absolute  
That not another comfort like to this  
Succeeds in unknown fate.

(2.1.175–85)

And this in turn confirms his faith in a divine universal harmony comparable with that of the world’s creation:

Perdition catch my soul  
But I do love thee; and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.

(3.3.90–2)

The rarity of such affection as this (and its possible danger) has been rightly described by Helen Gardner,<sup>5</sup> another of the Moor’s defenders, as an ‘attempt to found

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. W. K. Wimsatt, 1960, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> In NS, pp. xxi–lvi.

<sup>3</sup> *Coleridge’s Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor, 2 vols, 1930, II, 350.

<sup>4</sup> NS, p. xxii.

<sup>5</sup> ‘*Othello*: a retrospect, 1960–67’, *S.Sur.* 21 (1968), 10.

the social bond of marriage on passionate love... a great adventure of the human spirit... that brings with it a possibility of agony that those who seek for no such unity in their experience do not risk'.

Total erotic commitment is inextricably linked with that other centre of Othello's being out of which it grew and which it ultimately replaced: his pride in the exercise of his profession of arms. Educated opinion about war has changed during the present century, as a result of two World Wars, the fighting in Vietnam and the use by terrorists of a perverted military code. These things have made it difficult to see the soldier as the traditional symbol of uncomplicated masculine virtue, and critical response to this aspect of Othello's character has been greatly affected in consequence.

Othello is pre-eminently a soldier in the classic mould. He is, as John Bayley has demonstrated,<sup>1</sup> a man of achievement, aware of his supremacy in his profession. This accounts for the immense 'positional assurance'<sup>2</sup> he displays in the moments of crisis he has to face. It lies behind his crushing scorn of civilian streetbrawlers:

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them...  
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it  
Without a prompter.

(1.2.59-84)

And it is responsible for his angry assertion of power when the order of Cyprus is threatened:

Zounds, if I stir,  
Or do but lift this arm, the best of you  
Shall sink in my rebuke.

(2.3.188-90)

Whether he is facing Desdemona's irate father and her armed relatives, or answering the accusation of witchcraft before the full Senate, or dealing with a disciplinary problem on the watch, he demonstrates a capacity for swift decision, a monumental authority and a calm self-confidence that are characteristic of his kind. Unless we give the fullest emphasis to the ideal that lies behind these qualities and accept as valid Othello's view of himself as military man, the great farewell speech to his profession, with its spectacular sense of the glory and grandeur of war, becomes merely a mindless exercise in the glamorising of a peculiarly beastly job.

Growing out of the hero's idea of his self is the play's stress on 'reputation', which is the reflection of this self in others' eyes. His speeches are littered with references to the way 'estimation', 'report' and 'opinion' amount to a proof of worth, which in turn is given a wider context by the implications of these same concepts as they are discussed in their different ways by Cassio, Iago, Emilia and Desdemona. This urge in Othello for verbal definition is one part of the style of speech that Shakespeare fashioned for him, one that has no parallel in the whole canon. Wilson Knight,<sup>3</sup> its best analyst, calls it the '*Othello* music' - a 'highly-coloured... stately' idiom, 'rich in sound and phrase'. It is characterised by 'visual or tactile suggestion... the slightly overdecorative phrase... the presence of simple forward-flowing clarity of dignified

<sup>1</sup> *The Characters of Love*, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> R. B. Heilman, *Magic in the Web*, 1956, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> 'The *Othello* music', in *The Wheel of Fire*, 1930.

statement'. It has 'a unique solidity and precision of picturesque phrase or image' and 'a peculiar chastity and serenity of thought'. The power of such poetry is what defines Othello as both soldier and lover. For despite his apologies to the Senate that he is 'rude' in his speech, he is in fact very self-conscious about his rhetorical skill. He knows it is the vehicle for his majestic authority as well as the source of his power to win Desdemona, which he redisplayes in the plain unvarnished tale of the whole course of his love.

Any opinion of Othello's idiom and of his whole bearing must also take into account the normal Renaissance expectations of such a man. Because he is 'a prince by his birth and only one below a prince by his office' he is obliged not to forget his place and should never act like an ordinary man. Except under Iago's influence, Othello never does; and John Holloway<sup>1</sup> has produced evidence to suggest that in attitude, manner and speech he may be considered to be acting strictly in accordance with the most famous sixteenth-century conduct manuals on how a prince should behave.

For the defenders of the 'Noble Moor', the terrible fall of the play's middle scenes is testimony to Iago's power of manipulating and perverting Othello's positive strengths. All his soldierly qualities are rechannelled so as to be used destructively in an erotic sphere rather than appropriately in a military one. Power of immediate decision becomes rash and thoughtless response; clarity of objective turns into ruthless pursuit of an obsession; awareness of a deserved reputation is transformed into a monomaniacal concentration on himself as an object of universal scorn; and his electric blend of thought and action is placed at the service of a heartless revenge. By such means does a sublime and idealising love become its own disease, jealousy. Once this hell is passed through, the traditionalists' Othello is seen to rise in the final scene above his former degradation. The tears he sheds at his wife's death-bed are tears of joy at the new realisation that 'the devil has been proved false and she true, that her soul is in bliss, that she had loved him after all'.<sup>2</sup>

However, in the accounts of even the most ardent of the 'Noble Moor's' advocates, there runs a thread of reservation. For some the character is the product of a confined imagination; for others he lacks the visionary dimension of the other tragic heroes, and for many there is a lack of inwardness in his creation, as though Shakespeare's shaping mind were not wholly engaged. It is just this kind of reservation that is the clue to the whole character and the play itself for those critics who hold the second view of Othello. These may be represented by F. R. Leavis,<sup>3</sup> whose essay on the play has had far too much influence owing to his great authority as a critic of poetry and the novel, and despite the fact that his remarkable gifts are clearly of the type that makes him about as naturally incapable of appreciating drama as it is possible to be. Leavis's Othello 'has from the beginning responded to Iago's "communications" in the way Iago desired and with a promptness that couldn't be improved upon', and he does so because his love is 'composed very largely of ignorance of self as well as ignorance of [Desdemona]...it [is] much more a matter of self-centred and self-

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of the Night*, 1961, pp. 37-56.

<sup>2</sup> NS, p. lvi.

<sup>3</sup> 'Diabolic intellect and the noble hero', in *The Common Pursuit*, 1952.

regarding satisfactions – pride, sensual possessiveness, appetite, love of loving'. With varying degrees of stridency others have developed this picture of an easily-duped, egregiously egocentric Moor. His majestic idiom itself is viewed as incontrovertible evidence of his proclivity for self-dramatisation, his romantic capacity for self-delusion, his inability to cope with life, his flair for the picturesque and the histrionic. His soldierly authority is to such writers a façade masking a psychological need to rely upon position because he is secretly unsure of himself and hypersensitive to all challenge. And his deep erotic commitment is really an indication of his inexperience in giving, the hallmark of a middle-aged man disqualified for a demanding personal relationship by a life in the camps.<sup>1</sup>

It is the ending of the play that provokes the greatest disagreement in accounts of the two Othellos. For the traditionalists his last great speech (5.2.334–52) re-elevates the hero to his former grandeur and nobility because he realises the truth and can justify his deliberate act of self-punishment. For those who consider the Moor merely credulous and foolish, T. S. Eliot may speak in his notorious condemnation of the death speech:

What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is *cheering himself up*. He is endeavouring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself... dramatising himself against his environment. He takes in the spectator, but the human motive is primarily to take in himself.<sup>2</sup>

It is obvious that the two main views of Othello are based as much on the ideals of the critics themselves as on their reading of the play. Johnson's picture of the Moor is clearly that of the sedentary intellectual who elsewhere said, 'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea.'<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the version of Leavis and Eliot is that of all people for whom introspection, self-awareness, deliberate thought, balanced judgement and the contented inhabitation of a dilemma are more congenial than a life of action and passionate involvement. As the play in the theatre draws the audience emotionally into its world, so the play in the study challenges the reader's own intellectual convictions and assumptions.

The character of Iago has occasioned far less critical disagreement than that of Othello. Because there is no possibility of any difference in the moral judgement to be passed on his nature and his behaviour, the innumerable studies of him tend to elaborate aspects of the negation he embodies – materialism, perversion, hatred, bestialism, destruction, doubt, satanic glee and death. His two faces have fascinated literary critics every bit as much as the problems of conveying them credibly on stage have taxed the actor's art. Bradley was at his very best on the subject, and many of his ideas have been elaborated by his successors, notably W. H. Auden,<sup>4</sup> in his picture of the satanic practical joker *par excellence*, and William Empson,<sup>5</sup> who saw him as a critique of an unconscious pun on the word *honest*.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. A. Nicoll, *Studies in Shakespeare*, 1931; L. Kirschbaum, 'The modern Othello', *ELH* 2 (1944), 283–96; D. A. Traversi, *Approach to Shakespeare*, 1938; R. B. Heilman, *Magic in the Web*, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> 'Shakespeare and the stoicism of Seneca', in *Selected Essays*, 1932 (1949 edn), pp. 130–1.

<sup>3</sup> J. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill and L. F. Powell, 1924, III, 265–6.

<sup>4</sup> 'The joker in the pack', in *The Dyer's Hand*, 1962.

<sup>5</sup> 'Honest in Othello', in *The Structure of Complex Words*, 1951.

The total credibility of his villainy has rightly been seen to come from the complete imaginative involvement of the dramatist, the inwardness that seems to have gone into his creation; and from the perfectly judged fashioning of an idiom and imagery and vocabulary that convincingly embody his brutish vision of the world and that infect Othello's own quite different speech during the middle scenes of the play.<sup>1</sup> This achievement has been attributed to Shakespeare's unconscious recognition of a similarity between his own playwright's art and Iago's thought processes as the 'amateur of tragedy', as Hazlitt called him. In Bradley's words, there is a

curious analogy between the early stages of dramatic composition and those soliloquies in which Iago broods over his plot, drawing at first only an outline, puzzled how to fix more than the main idea, and gradually seeing it develop and clarify as he works upon it or lets it work.<sup>2</sup>

However, this *aperçu* can be (and has been) taken too far if it is not remembered that there is a wide divergence between Shakespeare's and Iago's achievements: the play is a success owing to total artistic control by the dramatist, whereas Iago's plot is a failure by a miscalculating improviser.

The two main areas of dispute about the character concern his motivation and the real nature of his psychological make-up and what it represents symbolically. Interpreters have puzzled over Coleridge's phrase describing the apparently passionate origin of Iago's motives and the detached intellectual coolness with which he formulates them in his speeches: 'the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity'.<sup>3</sup> In disagreeing, some have argued that, because we learn of his jealousy, professional disappointment and personal hatred of Cassio from his soliloquies, we must accept them 'not of course as true, but as the expression of his actual feelings'.<sup>4</sup> Others, also relying on theatrical convention, have explained away the nature of his evil and his justifications of it by drawing attention to his descent from earlier stage types. It has been strongly argued, for example, that his theatrical ancestor is the old Vice of the Morality plays, who as the agent of Satan was obliged to declare himself malign even while he uttered accurate assessments of the human virtues it was his mission to pervert and destroy.<sup>5</sup> But it has also been pointed out that he has as many features of the stage representations of the Devil himself as of his dramatic surrogates.<sup>6</sup>

The attempts to describe the actual configuration of Iago's psyche have been as various as the interests and private bugbears of the critics writing them. As the type of amoral artist he is found to be fashioning a world in his own image; as the classic stage Machiavel he personifies rationality, self-interest, hypocrisy, cunning, expediency and efficient 'police'. Latent homosexuality and deep-rooted misogyny have been cited as the real driving forces of his nature; and he has not escaped identification with other twentieth-century bogeymen: the amoral experimental scientist and the omnipresent death-wisher.

<sup>1</sup> See S. L. Bethell, 'The diabolic images in *Othello*', *S.Sur.* 5 (1952), 62-80; and M. M. Morozov, 'The individualization of Shakespeare's characters through imagery', *S.Sur.* 2 (1949), 83-106.

<sup>2</sup> Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 231.

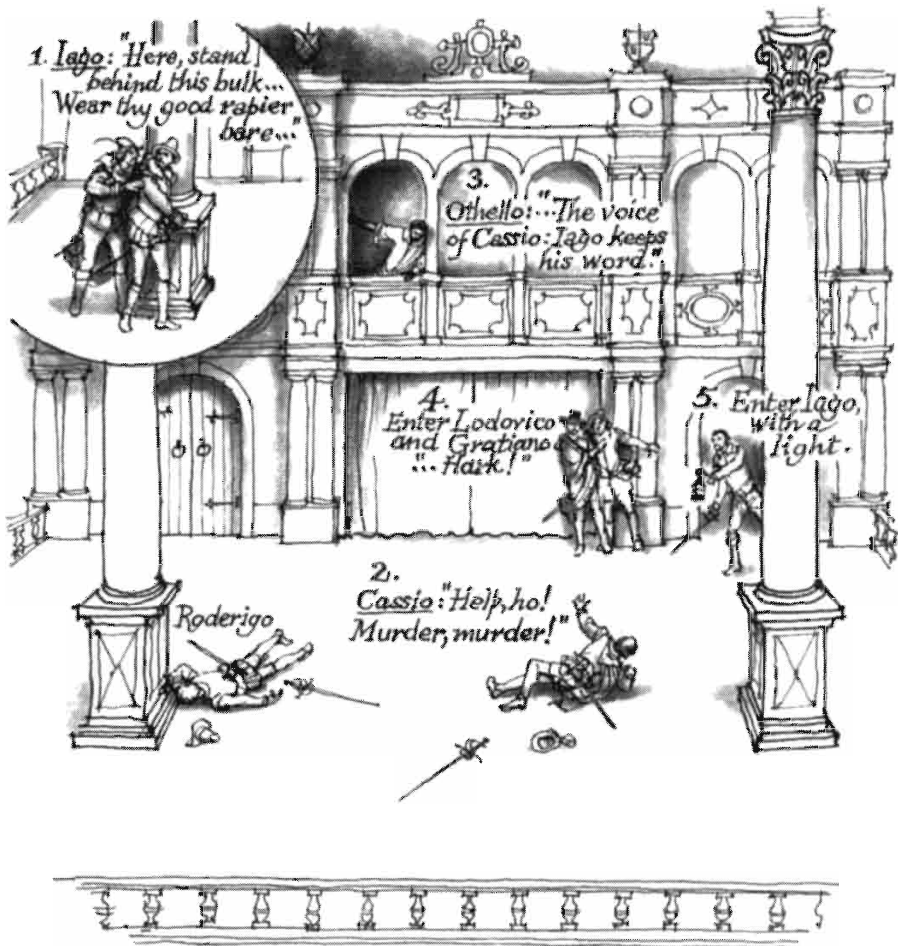
<sup>3</sup> Coleridge's *Shakespearean Criticism*, 1, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Muir, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> B. Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil*, 1958.

<sup>6</sup> L. Scragg, 'Iago - vice or devil?', *S.Sur.* 21 (1968), 53-65.





5 A possible staging of Act 5, Scene 1, as at the Globe Theatre, by C. Walter Hodges. Successive events, shown here simultaneously, are numbered in sequence. See p. 201 below

Of course, all views of Iago will be influenced by the opinions their holders have of Othello, because the source and direction of his terrifying power over the Moor are, as even Thomas Rymer<sup>1</sup> perceived, a crucial critical issue of the play. The 'Noble Moor' implies a villain of almost supernatural powers; whereas an easily credulous ass makes for merely a pathological liar putting in train an action that moves out of his control during the last two acts. Obviously Iago is parasitic on Othello; and there have not been lacking voices to push this fact to its logical conclusion by claiming that the two men are dramatised aspects of the human condition, or symbolic representatives of the conflicting forces in a single psyche; as J. I. M. Stewart has it,

<sup>1</sup> See N. Alexander, 'Thomas Rymer and *Othello*', *S.Sur.* 21 (1968), 67-77.

Othello is the human soul as it strives to be and Iago is that which corrodes or subverts it from within... It is as if Iago only wins out because of something fundamentally treacherous in time, some flux and reflux in it which is inimical to life and love.<sup>1</sup>

It is only relatively recently that the character of Desdemona has been accorded the kind of critical attention always received by the two leading male roles. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were many who shared Thomas Rymer's distaste at the very fact of her marrying a blackamoor. Even Coleridge was taken aback by a noble Venetian lady's choice of 'a veritable negro' for a husband;<sup>2</sup> and other critics, less restrained, were convinced that she was 'little less than a wanton', or 'strumpet-like', or a moral coward lacking in any self-respect.<sup>3</sup> Modern versions of such disapproval have been less extreme and range from B. Spivack's<sup>4</sup> odd conviction that Cassio and Desdemona are really in love with one another to Auden's belief that 'given a few more years of Othello and Emilia's influence... she might well, one feels, have taken a lover'.<sup>5</sup>

However, such anti-Desdemona impulses are the exception rather than the rule. As Marvin Rosenberg<sup>6</sup> has noticed, she has more frequently during the present century been 'in grave danger of being canonized'. As early as 1904 A. C. Bradley<sup>7</sup> had started the dehumanising trend with his opinion that she is 'ardent with the courage and idealism of a saint'; and others have followed his lead, transforming her variously into the world of the spirit that Iago wishes to destroy,<sup>8</sup> or a life-force for order, community, growth and light,<sup>9</sup> or goodness and purity personified,<sup>10</sup> or the supreme value of love.<sup>11</sup>

In a general way all these opinions depend on our seeing Desdemona's life in the play as being dependent on how we view Othello – on our assuming that she is, although in a very different way, as dramatically parasitical on the hero as Iago is. But, as a recent writer has put it, 'the significance of the play is deepened by what it shows her individual inner experience to be – especially what it shows in her love for Othello and her ways of responding to him throughout the action'.<sup>12</sup> When taken as a person in her own right, Desdemona may be seen to have a more complex character than she was credited with in earlier criticism, the principal lineaments of which are already clear. Her sexuality is squarely faced and emphasis is laid upon 'her sensual attraction to Othello, which she never thinks of denying' and which is the part of her nature that makes her powerfully attractive to all the men in the play. The independence of spirit that leads her to defy society's conventions, to be half the wooer, and to beg before the full Senate for permission to accompany her husband to Cyprus is seen to be the same strength that 'enables her to bear the public

<sup>1</sup> *Character and Motive in Shakespeare*, 1949, pp. 107–8.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge's *Shakespearean Criticism*, 1, 47.

<sup>3</sup> See Rosenberg, *Masks of Othello*, pp. 207–8.

<sup>4</sup> Spivack, *Allegory of Evil*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> 'The alienated city: reflections on *Othello*', *Encounter* 17 (August 1961), 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Masks of Othello*, p. 208.

<sup>7</sup> Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 201.

<sup>8</sup> Heilman, *Magic in the Web*.

<sup>9</sup> A. Kernan, 'Othello: an introduction', in A. Harbage (ed.), *Shakespeare: The Tragedies*, 1964, p. 80.

<sup>10</sup> Spivack, *Allegory of Evil*.

<sup>11</sup> Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*.

<sup>12</sup> J. Adamson, 'Othello' as *Tragedy*, 1980, p. 215.

humiliation of a blow, to insist to a raging Othello that she is indeed honest, and to argue her innocence with considerable passion'.<sup>1</sup> Even her ability to deceive her father is interpreted as evidence of the remarkable control over her true feelings which she later exercises on the beach, and on public occasion and in private encounter in the final scenes.

The two chief aspects of this 'new' Desdemona that force a reconsideration of her role in the moral scheme of the play are the particular qualities of her innocence and her love. Both are connected with a sexual unself-consciousness which is 'neither an ignorant nor a repressed state of mind' but is 'the mark of her absolutely positive moral standing when contrasted with the sexually self-conscious, self-torturing and destructive personalities of her persecutors'.<sup>2</sup> Her love is something larger than the helpless affection found in most traditional accounts. Her relationship with her husband is every bit as all-embracing as his love for her. It is 'more crucial to her than her life; and in recognising that she cannot exist without his love, accepting her death is the only way she has of being circumstanced, shutting herself up to Fortune's alms, by a kind of suicide'.<sup>3</sup> For this seventeenth-century feminist a tragic death is preferable to relinquishing responsibility for her own life.

In the mass of criticism devoted to the play one can find illuminating analysis of almost every aspect of it; what one cannot find is any consensus about the nature of its unique world or the ordering of its moral landscape. Perhaps such a consensus should be sought in the one area about which even critics furthest apart agree: namely, its success as a work for the theatre. Older scholars like Levin Schücking and Elmer Stoll<sup>4</sup> have given primacy to dramatic values; but because they were applying a corrective to what they saw as Bradley's novelistic approach to the play, they both overstressed the mere reaching for sensational effect by devices of bold unrealism. More recently, critics have focused on a rather different aspect of the play's theatrical existence – the audience's reaction to it. The spectator, being a part of the dramatic event Shakespeare designed, is himself invited 'to enter the world of *Othello* and its rhythms, not only through imagining himself into the world on stage but through his own responses to that imagined world'.<sup>5</sup>

What must be faced in any future critical account is what the stage history makes quite clear: that completely satisfying performances can be given which have at their heart quite different readings of the central character and his true nature. The savage animalism of Salvini's performance on the nineteenth-century stage was recalled vividly long after he had ceased to play; and Godfrey Tearle's gentleman-poet, created at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1948, has remained definitive for many a still-living playgoer. This must mean that both elements of the character are deeply written into the role. Naturally, the actor has to make a single choice and stick with it – such is

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Cook, 'The design of Desdemona: doubt raised and resolved', *S.St.* 13 (1980), 192.

<sup>2</sup> W. Adamson, 'Unpinned or undone?: Desdemona's critics and the problem of sexual innocence', *S.St.* 13 (1980), 183. <sup>3</sup> Adamson, 'Othello' as Tragedy, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup> L. Schücking, *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays*, 1922; E. E. Stoll, *Othello: An Historical and Comparative Study*, 1915.

<sup>5</sup> R. Hapgood, 'Othello', in S. Wells (ed.), *Shakespeare: Select Bibliographical Guides*, 1973, pp. 165-6; see also Adamson, 'Othello' as Tragedy, on this topic.

the nature of his medium. But the literary critic is not obliged to ignore the multiple levels of the part that the performer cannot simultaneously represent on stage. In fact, criticism which settles for a single definition is aping the mental processes of Iago instead of attempting to appreciate the supreme artistry of Shakespeare's manipulation of the series of dichotomies on which the play is based and which enable the audience to respond to the experience it offers with a complexity not possible for the characters themselves.

Visually and metaphorically the opposition of black and white is at the heart of the work. And this is explored in all its variants: evil and good, deceit and truth, illusion and reality, ignorance and knowledge, dishonesty and honesty, hate and love, death and life. These polarities, however, are not offered us as the series of clearly defined alternatives that this listing suggests; rather, all the terms are dramatically and poetically redefined. Iago is perceived by everyone as 'honest' which in his case actually means 'dishonest'; Desdemona appears to Othello to be 'unchaste' but is in truth 'honest'. Physically Othello is black like the devil, yet it is beneath the white skin of Iago that the real devil lurks. But then Desdemona's whiter skin than alabaster is not the sepulchre concealing her dishonour but the symbol of her purity and truth. Iago's seductive display of rationalism is not the divine function of the mind, it is a perversion. It is instead Othello's instinctive response to life that is always more 'reasonable'.

Just as such usually accepted absolutes are questioned by a profound mental quibbling so that the distinctions between them become blurred, so the characters are seen as being not made up of well-defined strengths and weaknesses. Their personal qualities are good or bad, strong or weak only in accordance with the way they are used. Othello's immense capacity for total personal commitment to an ideal leads him to make romantic love the cornerstone of his marriage and his existence; but this same characteristic causes him to react violently to the belief that he was wrong in so doing. All his outstanding professional virtues become parodies of themselves when he draws on them to solve problems of a personal relationship. Decisiveness becomes rash action; emotional engagement turns into ruthless obsession; automatic active response to crisis is transformed into a capacity for murder. Similarly with Desdemona: independence of mind emerges as stubborn persistence; joyful erotic confidence leads to dangerous interference in her husband's professional life; innocent conviction precludes any apprehension of evil until it is too late; assumption of responsibility for her own fate turns into something perilously close to masochism; and, most horrifying of all, a love that transcends all ordinary limits results in the passive acceptance of death at its loss.

The whole play is founded on the different ways a single object may be viewed because of divergent human perspectives, interpretations and natural predilections. In ordinary lives it is difficult to maintain black-and-white divisions in any of those beliefs by which we order our existence. Circumstances demand the modification of our ideals, conditions force upon us reduced aspirations and narrowed expectations. We know that each time we make such an adjustment we are parting with the better part of ourselves. Yet we hope even as we make the inevitable compromise that it

does not entail the destruction of the value involved. But the tragic hero is not ordinary. He is someone who is willing to live out the truth of his being regardless of the consequences; and for this attempt he pays the full price.

The subject of *Othello* is the possibility of full self-realisation within the context of personal relationships. This is what makes it the most private of the great tragedies and ultimately accounts for an audience's sense of involvement in it of the sort that the stage history illustrates. To complain of its lack of supernatural reference or its limited metaphysical range is to miss the point. Lodovico's command – 'The object poisons sight; / Let it be hid' – is the only possible end, because the arena for the struggle the protagonists have lived through is best symbolised by the curtained bed. The complex relationship between Othello, Iago and Desdemona unleashes the creative and destructive forces inherent in the human condition; but it does so in a way that affects no one but themselves.

### The language of the play

One of the more interesting developments in the criticism of Shakespeare in recent years has been the emphasis laid on the purely theatrical aspects of his plays. John Russell Brown<sup>1</sup> and others have drawn our attention to the ways in which drama can make its impact by non-verbal means and to the wealth of action that lies between the lines, in the sub-text. As a result we can see that weight must be given to such symbolic effects as the physically conveyed emblem of a cowardly Falstaff carrying the misplaced honour of Hotspur bodily from the battlefield at Shrewsbury, or the apparently infinite possibilities in delivery, costume, movement and gesture offered the actors by the Folio and quarto texts.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the obvious value of this kind of criticism, we should not forget that it is, however, the text alone that demands some stage business and offers possibilities for others. All theatrical contrivance must either grow directly out of or be legitimately suggested by the received text; if it does not, we find ourselves with a travesty of the play – of which there have been far too many in the twentieth-century theatre. The blueprint Shakespeare passed to his fellows was invariably a highly-wrought verbal construct, and it is from this that our experience of the work – like theirs – must begin. This is especially true of *Othello*, in which Shakespeare seems to have used so many of the resources of the language as vehicles for deliberately designed dramatic effects.

Most immediately striking are the carefully-fashioned and quite distinct idioms he invented for his two main characters. At the most obvious level we notice that Iago uses more prose than Othello. Further, this prose is characterised by the stylistic patterns typical of Euphuism,<sup>3</sup> one example of which is this:

<sup>1</sup> For example, in *Shakespeare's Dramatic Style*, 1971, and in his 'theatrical' edition of *Othello* in *Shakespeare in Performance*, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> J. R. Brown, 'The study and practice of Shakespeare production', *S.Sur.* 18 (1965), 58–69.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Clemen has brilliantly isolated this aspect of Iago's dialogue in *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*, 1951, ch. 13.



(1.2.1), which can be demonstrated in the personalised brutality of warfare when a man might yerk his enemy under the ribs (1.2.5) and which he believes can best be organised by a pedestrian system of advancement, 'the old gradation, where each second / Stood heir to the first' (1.1.37-8). The images he draws from the sea and commerce are equally unromantic: with an emphasis on the common sailor's handling of ropes (1.3.328-9) or an insistence on seeing Othello's winning of Desdemona as the action of a freebooter who has 'boarded a land carrack' he hopes to make 'lawful prize' (1.2.50-1).

This capacity in Iago to reduce imaginatively all he contemplates is most vividly seen in those lines which convey his view of humanity. All spiritual values are debased. Love is merely an anatomical function - 'carnal stings... a lust of the blood and a permission of the will' (1.3.322-36); reputation is 'an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving' (2.3.247-8); Cassio's modern military skills which earned him quick promotion are reduced to the activities of a grubbing book-keeper (1.1.31); Othello's romantic vision of his profession is really only a love of 'pride and purposes' manifesting itself in 'bombast circumstance, / Horribly stuffed with epithets of war' (1.1.12-14); loyalty and service are 'obsequious bondage' like that of an ass (1.2.45-8); women are things (3.3.304), guinea-hens (1.3.309), and wild-cats (2.1.109).

These last two comparisons are examples of perhaps the most repulsive aspect of Iago's vocabulary: namely his tendency to depict the world as a 'stable or malodorous menagerie'.<sup>1</sup> His speech habitually degrades human activities to the level of the doings of despicable animals: he himself is a spider who will 'ensnare as great a fly as Cassio' (2.1.164) and Roderigo becomes his hunting dog to be loosed on the lieutenant (2.1.284-5); married men are but yoked beasts of burden (4.1.64-5); Othello is a Barbary horse (1.1.111-12) and an old black ram tugging the white ewe Desdemona (1.1.89-90); and the act of love is a making of a 'beast with two backs' (1.1.116).

It is, however, quite another kind of reference that moves Iago's speech from the merely psychopathic to the metaphysical plane. All of his real life is inward. Driven by a Machiavellian materialism and self-interest, he values only those who 'Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves' (1.1.51) and considers 'soul' to be the possession only of men who 'do themselves homage' (1.1.54). As he tells us himself, he is not what he is (1.1.66): not the 'honest' blunt-spoken soldier that most characters in the play attest to his being, but rather a devil creating his own hell on earth and effecting the damnation of others. Darkness is his natural element and he dominates the three night scenes (1.1, 2.3, 5.1). He calls easily on the powers of blackness, on the 'Divinity of hell' (2.3.317); his success in trapping Cassio is recognised, as the warning bell proves his skill, with 'Diabolo, ho!' (2.3.142); 'Hell and night' form the climate that will bring his 'monstrous birth to the world's light' (1.3.385-6). He really believes that he can turn Desdemona's virtue into pitch (2.3.327), make human love into the prey of 'the green-eyed monster' of jealousy (3.3.168), and Cassio's quality of daily beauty into crass irresponsibility.

<sup>1</sup> See Morozov's analysis of this in 'Individualization of Shakespeare's characters', pp. 87-9.

He can, of course, do none of these things; but he has the ability to do something much worse: he can make them seem to be true. This Ensign who does not show the flag of his real nature (1.1.155–6) is the master stage director who can manage his cast of players so that two nocturnal broils are enacted without the participants realising they are not acting spontaneously; he can verbally create a scene of adultery which can set Othello on the rack (4.1.1–34); he can put on ‘heavenly shows’ which are actually devilish entertainments (2.3.318–20). Even his props are not what they seem to be: the handkerchief, so emotionally loaded by Othello, is simultaneously the precious gift to Desdemona and yet a trifle light as air (3.3.323), which Cassio’s possession transforms into what it is not. That which Othello does not even see clearly in Cassio’s hand – ‘Was that mine?’ (4.1.166) – becomes the ocular proof of adultery. ‘Honesty’ itself is in him a guise of dishonesty; and a particular kind of honesty (i.e. chastity) in Desdemona appears to be begrimed and black as Othello’s face (3.3.387–9).

One of the means which Shakespeare employs to indicate the gradual hold Iago develops over Othello’s mind is the growing infection of his speech by Iago’s vocabulary.<sup>1</sup> The villain’s bifurcated vision is impossible for the hero. Whereas the former delights in the dualities of saint and devil, beauty and dishonesty, alabaster skin and the possibility of concealed rottenness, the latter finds such insecurity unbearable. For him ‘to be once in doubt / Is once to be resolved’ (3.3.181–2) – that is, to be certain of the opposite of the quality so doubted. This transference of manner of thought from man to man is commenced in an exchange in which the words heard are only the tips of the psychological action taking place in the sub-text:

IAGO My noble lord –  
 OTHELLO What dost thou say, Iago?  
 IAGO Did Michael Cassio,  
 When you wooed my lady, know of your love?  
 OTHELLO He did from first to last. Why dost thou ask?  
 IAGO But for a satisfaction of my thought;  
 No further harm.  
 OTHELLO Why of thy thought, Iago?  
 IAGO I did not think he had been acquainted with her.  
 OTHELLO O yes, and went between us very oft.  
 IAGO Indeed?  
 OTHELLO Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern’st thou aught in that?  
 Is he not honest?  
 IAGO Honest, my lord?  
 OTHELLO Honest? Ay, honest.  
 IAGO My lord, for aught I know.  
 OTHELLO What dost thou think?  
 IAGO Think, my lord? (3.3.92–106)

Iago’s habitual conception of man as animal produces in Othello’s mind a hideous vision of a bestial world inhabited by goats, monkeys, toads, crocodiles, blood-sucking flies and poisonous snakes. The distant romantic world filled with anthropophagi and

<sup>1</sup> See Bethell, ‘The diabolic images in *Othello*’.



headless men that was so integral a part of Othello's courtship is recreated in his marriage bed with horned men and green-eyed monsters for its inhabitants. Iago's Scarfe-like view has become for Othello a nightmare of Hieronymus Bosch.

Ironically the Moor takes over too the Venetian's diabolic vision. The mental hell he creates for himself with Iago's assistance has at its centre the 'devil' Desdemona. The prayer for perdition to catch his soul (3.3.90-1) in his last moment of perfect erotic security is answered by his ensign. Desdemona becomes in his eyes a 'fair devil' (3.3.479) with a demonically sweating palm (3.4.38), who must be 'double damned' (4.2.36) because she is 'false as hell' (4.2.38), and whose fate must be determined by 'black vengeance' called from its 'hollow cell' (3.3.448) for the purpose. Her bedroom is the inferno itself at the door of which stands her maid Emilia as portress (4.2.89-91) and in which she must be killed lest, Satan-like, 'she'll betray more men' (5.2.6). When we thus consider the dimensions of the horrible conceit wrought by Iago's suggestions in Othello's imagination there can be no greater irony in the play than what he says just prior to his total collapse: 'It is not words that shakes me thus' (4.1.40).

Othello's idiomatic norm which Iago so perverts is far different from this animalistic, monstrous, diabolic universe. It is in fact one of the glories of English dramatic poetry. So much has been written about it that it is sufficient here to instance some of the characteristics of the '*Othello* music'.<sup>1</sup>

The first point to be made about it is that this stately, formal, slow-moving poetry, so heavily loaded with vividly realised physicality, is the perfect vehicle for conveying to the audience the cast of mind, character and powerful emotion of this hero who is 'in life', as he tells us, rude in his speech and 'little blessed with the soft phrase of peace' (1.3.81-2). He is no more a 'poet' than any other verse-speaking character in the play; it is merely that this eloquent verbal music best exhibits the nature of the man his experience has made him. As G. Wilson Knight<sup>2</sup> has sensitively observed, there is an inward aloofness, a separation of image from image and word from word, seen clearly in a passage such as this:

O heavy hour!

Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse  
Of sun and moon, and that th'affrighted globe  
Should yawn at alteration.

(5.2.99-102)

Here, as elsewhere, the machinery of the universe is vividly juxtaposed with human experience. In a similar manner geographical spread and adventurous travel are compared, at length but distantly, with moments of powerful emotion and states of being: in the great aria describing his wooing (1.3.127-69) and in the assertion of his unswerving will (3.3.454-63). Even as he comes to face the truth in his haunting final lines, there is the same non-fusion of images, as the medicinal gum of the Arabian trees is set against the non-curative tears Othello sheds; as another ignorant pagan unknowingly throws away great wealth; and as one kind of state traitor, 'a malignant

<sup>1</sup> G. Wilson Knight in *The Wheel of Fire*, 1959 edn, pp. 97-119.

<sup>2</sup> *Wheel of Fire*, pp. 97-8.

and a turbaned Turk', simply parallels the Moor himself, a far worse traducer who struck down the loveliest of all Venetians (5.2.334-52).

In the theatre, the voices of Robeson or Tearle in our own day have projected movingly the most remarkable quality of Othello's speech: its romantic, heroic, picturesque, adventurous, exotic nature. For him life is highly coloured, euphemistically elevated. War is not, as it is for Iago, a trade, but a glorious world of tented fields, plumed troops, neighing steeds, shrill trumps, spirit-stirring drums, and cannons which rather 'th'immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit' (3.3.349-58) than kill messily. Every facet of his life that is susceptible to an enhancing inflation is emphasised, even as those which cannot be relegated to being of minimum influence and small memory. His being sold into slavery and his redemption thence are quite overwhelmed poetically by his recollections of cannibals, blemmyae, heaven-touching hills, vast antres and arid deserts (1.3.139-44). Every line Othello utters in his normal manner illustrates how all he has experienced has been related to himself with a breathtaking egocentricity which is clearly signalled by the grammatical focus of his avowal of the sincerity of his love for Desdemona: 'She loved me for the dangers I had passed, / And I loved her that she did pity them' (1.3.166-7).

When Othello, late in life, finds in Desdemona the erotic equivalent of his military profession, he transfers on to her all the imaginative appreciation which had formerly been lavished on his career. She becomes his 'fair warrior' (2.1.174), his 'captain's captain' (2.1.74) and his camp companion. But more significant, and fatal, than this verbal militarising of his wife is his insistence on making her the sole object of his full powers of romantic projection. She is not only his love but Love itself which banished chaos from the universe at the beginning of the world (3.3.90-2). Meeting her after a frightening absence is quite literally for him the equivalent of heaven:

If it were now to die,  
'Twere now to be most happy; for I fear  
My soul hath her content so absolute  
That not another comfort like to this  
Succeeds in unknown fate.

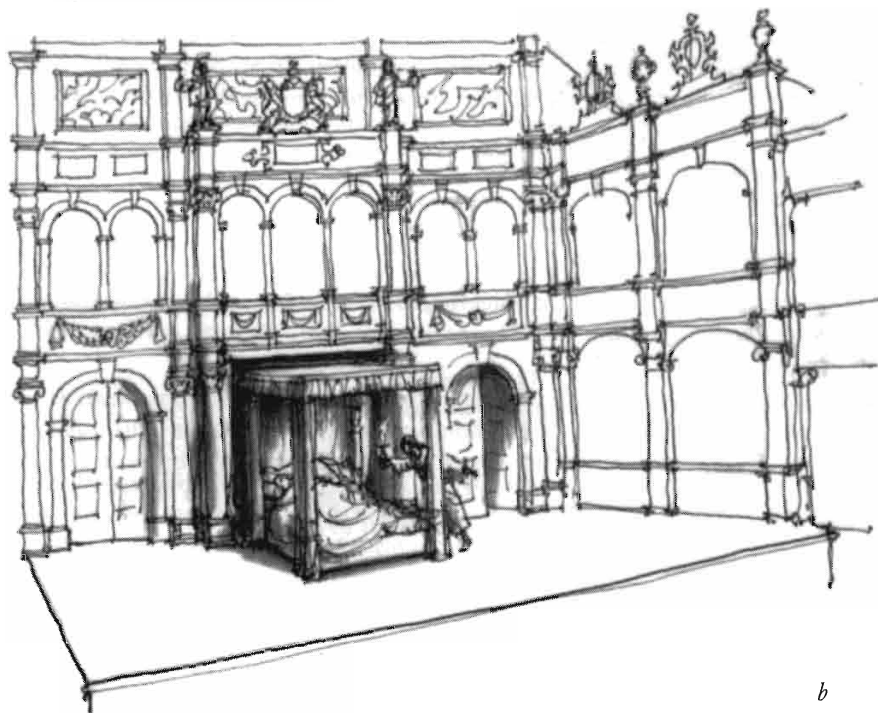
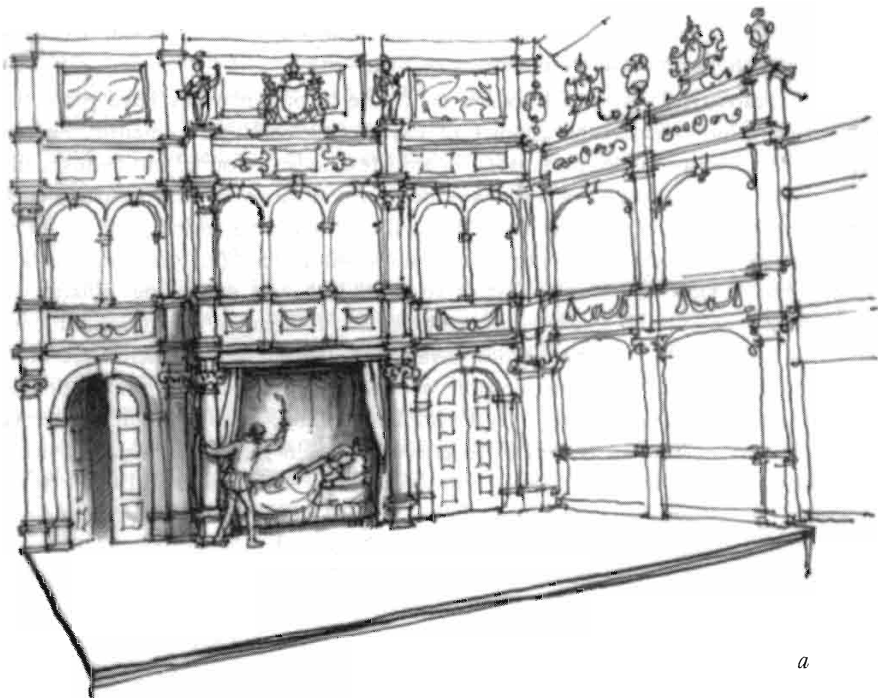
(2.1.181-5)

Just how totally unsuitable a character for the burden of such idealisation Desdemona actually is finds expression in her horrified response to this:

The heavens forbid  
But that our loves and comforts should increase,  
Even as our days do grow.

(2.1.185-7)

However, the poetry in the play is not merely a device for individualisation of character. The large language patterns interweave themselves across character, mental state and particular situation. Deceitful appearance is not linked exclusively with 'honest Iago'. Honest (i.e. chaste and truthful) Desdemona did deceive her father in wooing and marrying Othello, she does attempt to conceal from her husband the loss of the handkerchief, and she even dies with a charitable lie upon her lips about the manner of her death. Emilia's assumption of the façade of moral cynicism (4.3.60-99) is as false as her husband's exterior and conceals a love that makes her



6 Possible ways of staging Act 5, Scene 2, by C. Walter Hodges. Two methods (adapted from (a) Ross and (b) Hosley) conjectured for the original staging of Desdemona's bed at the Blackfriars Theatre. See p. 201 below

prepared to die in the defence of truth and goodness. Othello's black countenance is to Desdemona the unattractive casing of a beautiful mind, whereas to Roderigo, Brabantio and Iago it is the proper colouring for the devil Iago ensures he becomes. And Iago's own whiteness, quite different from the alabaster skin of Desdemona, hides a soul as black as any in the literature of the world.

This dichotomy between being and seeming is reflected in the language of blackness and whiteness, dark and light, hell and heaven that touches so many aspects of the play: the fact of miscegenation and the varied responses it provokes; the night hours in which Iago creates his discord and violence; and the hell of doubt and jealousy that is set against the lovers' celestial vision of their world.

Growing out of the geographical position of Venice as Europe's gateway to the exotic eastern lands is the thread of magic and witchcraft that surfaces at various points in the play. For Iago, of course, these things mean diabolic conjuring and devilish spirits to twist and pervert others. For Othello the magic in the web of the handkerchief is a symbol of the binding power of marital love (3.4.51-72), of the extent to which the gentle Desdemona has transformed his whole existence. It was by means of the witchcraft of his words that he was able to win her love, a form of enchantment her father took to be of a malignant nature (1.3.60-4, 99-106).

Naturally, none of the language in the play works in isolation, and many of its effects in their rich interrelationships can only be seen to the full when in production. Lighting, costume, sound-effects, blocking, actors' appearance, gesture and movement are all available to reinforce and develop the implications found in the verbal texture. No reading of the play, for example, can hold in the mind the blackness of Othello at *every* entrance, which a stage production conveys effortlessly with the simple application of make-up. The iterated vocabulary and imagery of trial and legal process become visually and positionally realised when we view the Senate scene (1.3) with the Duke as judge, the senators as jury, Brabantio as accuser, Othello as defendant and Desdemona as expert witness. The reader's silent registering of the exotic ambience of the play cannot have the ocularly induced excitement provided by the lavish 'discoveries' in Zeffirelli's production at the beginnings of 1.3 and 2.1, which were virtually animated Tintoretts. The authority and resonance of 'Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them' (1.2.59) are given an extra dimension when spoken by a white-gowned Paul Robeson with the swords pointed at his breast and the torchlight glistening on his black skin. The sheer alienation of Othello from his society will be held forever in the mind of the audiences who saw Laurence Olivier's cat-like, sensuous, Caribbean walk. The awful vulgarity of Iago's mind (a rarely noticed trait) was made actual when Leo McKern sat gleefully and gloatingly across the chest of the insensible Anthony Quayle; even as Iago's underlying twisted psyche was transmitted silently in the tiny betraying gestures of Jose Ferrer as he taunted the blundering Robeson.

Many similar theatrically conveyed meanings were obviously present in productions now out of living memory: Irving's slow revelation of Iago's diabolic countenance as he conceived his plan; Salvini's display of sexual savagery and hatred; Barry's physical projection of passion destroying reason; Quin's visual isolation of the black

and white dichotomy by the spotlighted peeling of a very white glove from a very black hand. All these effects, which struck the actors' contemporaries so forcibly, clearly grew out of the play's verbal patterns and yet elicited the kind of response of which we are incapable in the study.

Of course, no single production can hope to do more than realise some aspects of the drama's totality; even as no critical reading can attempt to do more than offer a simplified version of the original. Both the literary and the theatrical approaches are thus necessary and interrelated; for just as no production can convey the intellectual grasp of the poetic machinery of *Othello* that one can derive from Wilson Knight's essay on the '*Othello* music', so no essay can burn into the mental ear for a lifetime Godfrey Tearle's delivery of 'My wife, my wife! What wife? I have no wife' (5.2.98) with its huge freight of the despairing futility of all human aspiration.

### Stage history

Among actors *Othello* has always been one of the most admired of Shakespeare's plays. During the eighteenth century it was generally considered the greatest of the tragedies both for the regularity of its structure and the truth of its characterisation. Admiration was just as high in the nineteenth century, though there was more effort at this time to define the nature of the work as a whole, by taking into account its eloquence, romance and passion, and the strong character oppositions. In the present century, while there has been much theatrical discussion of these same aspects of the play, more emphasis has been placed on the ways in which it differs radically from the other tragedies. However, one reaction that actors over the years seem to have in common is their ready appreciation of the theatrical difficulties and opportunities presented by the title role – one that, as Colley Cibber put it, the 'Master Actor would delight in'.

In the early-seventeenth-century performances by the King's Men, Burbage and Swanston played *Othello*; and from contemporary testimony the former's interpretation was apparently remembered vividly alongside his *Hamlet*. There is some evidence that Taylor, who acted *Iago*, was aware of the humorous ingredient in the part; for Charles Guilden complained

I'm assur'd, from very good hands, that the person that acted *Iago* was in much esteem of a comedian which made Shakespear put several words and expressions into his part, perhaps not agreeable to his character, to make the audience laugh.<sup>1</sup>

At the company's performance at Oxford in 1610, however, while all the actors were capable of drawing tears from the crowd, it was the boy who impersonated *Desdemona* who, as one spectator reported, 'moved us especially in her death when, as she lay on her bed, her face itself implored the pity of the audience'.<sup>2</sup>

The play's popularity on the Restoration stage is amply attested by the number of performances. Even in opposition, Thomas Rymer provided supporting evidence:

<sup>1</sup> *Reflections on Rymer's Short View of Tragedy* (1694), in Furness, p. 397.

<sup>2</sup> Tillotson, *TLS*, 20 July 1933, p. 494.

'From all the tragedies on our English stage, *Othello* is said to bear the bell away'; and it is significant that it is this play that came most readily to Aphra Behn's mind in defending the decency of her own works. Pepys saw the play twice: first, on 11 October 1660 at the Cockpit Theatre with Burt as the Moor and Clun as Iago. During this performance the final scene made the same impact as it had in Oxford fifty years earlier; for 'a pretty lady' sitting next to the diarist 'called out, to see Desdemona smothered'. In a second viewing at the Theatre Royal on 6 February 1669, Pepys thought that Burt's performance had deteriorated, and that the Iago of Mohun was inferior to Clun's. Later in the century Burt was superseded by Hart (a celebrated Cassio) and the strikingly handsome Kynaston assumed Cassio's role.

It was during the Restoration that performances of *Othello* took on a dimension they had not previously possessed; for it was at this time that an actress first played Desdemona. If the illustration for Nicholas Rowe's edition really does reflect contemporary stage practice (see illustration 3*b*), then the highly sexual verbal content of the play was given a visual equivalence not possible in Shakespeare's day. It is perhaps a testimony to the play's popularity that this first appearance of an actress in the leading female role was the subject of a special, rather leering, prologue:

I saw the lady dressed.

The woman plays today: mistake me not;

No man in gown, or page in petticoat;

A woman to my knowledge, yet I can't

(If I should die) make affidavit on't.<sup>1</sup>

There is no detailed account of any Restoration production; but one may speculate that the general impudicity and stress on lascivious behaviour rife in the comedies of the time must have influenced the portrayal of Othello's and Desdemona's love.

Yet, in keeping with the growth of neo-classical literary theory, the theatrical texts for *Othello* were undergoing a change at odds with some aspects of probable stage practice. The version of the play prepared for the Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin, displays numerous cuts aimed at 'refinement' of the original text in the interests of Decorum. Othello's lines suffer most, with a view to emphasising his nobility, dignity and heroic stature. The Smock Alley Moor is not allowed to wish that housewives make a skillet of his helm or for his nature to be exchanged for that of a goat. It is beneath his dignity to set Emilia to spy on Desdemona; and the final lines of his farewell to his profession apparently struck the Rymerish adapter as smacking too much of extravagant self-pity. Gone too is the obsessive visual sexuality of his lines at the beginning of 4.1; and he goes to his death without his tears like Arabian gum. Desdemona's occasional domestic allusions are excised in the interests of ladylike behaviour and speech; and her Willow Song apparently affronted the Restoration image of a tragic heroine. Iago's part suffers least, though some pruning was thought necessary in the more conspicuous examples of his hypocrisy.<sup>2</sup>

This refining process continued during the eighteenth century, typified by the texts

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jordan, *Royal Arbor of Loyal Poesie* (1664), pp. 24–5.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakespearean Prompt-Books of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. G. B. Evans, vol. vi, part 1, 1980.

produced by Francis Gentleman. But although there were versions like those of Ducis in France and Schröder in Germany, in which the ending was altered so that Othello and Desdemona might be saved, in England the play was never the mangled victim that *King Lear* became in the hands of Nahum Tate.

There are only seven years during the whole century in which there is no notice of a production of *Othello* in the London theatres. During the early period Betterton was the outstanding performer of the leading role, with Mrs Bracegirdle and Mrs Bradshaw as his Desdemonas. He probably acted the part as early as 1683, but his succession of great productions stretched from that of 21 May 1703 at Lincoln's Inn Fields to his farewell to the part on 15 September 1709 at the Queen's Theatre. Betterton's great strength lay in the subtlety with which he conveyed the awful agony of the victim of jealousy and lost love, and this is the quality of his playing that Richard Steele seized upon in his obituary of the actor:

the mixture of love that intruded upon his mind upon the innocent answers Desdemona makes, betrayed in his gesture such a variety and vicissitude of passions, as would admonish a man to be afraid of his own heart, and perfectly convince him, that it is to stab it, to admit that worst of daggers, jealousy.<sup>1</sup>

Barton Booth, who was Betterton's Cassio in his final appearance, took over the main role and acted it until 1727. He stressed the hero's moving struggles to keep powerful inner emotions under iron control, and managed the difficult blending of a tenderness that turns to pathos without weakness and a grandeur that becomes lost in fury without brutality. However, it was Quin who was Betterton's real successor. He was monumentally heroic in the neo-classical style, and his speaking gave the great lines every ounce of grandeur. His naturally striking presence was enhanced by his stately, slow-moving gait and the all-white uniform he adopted. While it was generally agreed that his interpretation lacked tenderness, pain and inner fire, he was immensely popular and some of the stage business he invented became famous – notably the slow peeling off of one white glove to reveal the black hand beneath it. He played the role for some twenty years, his final performance being at Covent Garden in 1751. Ryan and Cibber were the most frequent Iagos at this period, both of whom tended to project an impression of Machiavellian 'policie' in action with every line and gesture.

Despite Garrick's dominance of the English stage at this time, his Othello was a failure. His new 'natural' style of acting, which he had pioneered with Macklin, was at the opposite pole from Quin's old-fashioned heroic manner. Like all his acting, his performance was original in its conception, daring in execution, and based on a text in which many of the typical eighteenth-century cuts had been restored, most notably the epileptic fit in Act 4. But his small stature, his 'little wincings and gesticulations of body' and his high emotionalism alienated the age's standards of Decorum. His stark black make-up and high oriental turban provoked Quin's cruel jest that he looked exactly like the little black boy carrying the tea-kettle in Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*. Through even his friends' comments there runs the idea that his whole conception of the part was too strange, violent and undignified for the age of

<sup>1</sup> *The Tatler*, 4 May 1710.

elegance. His Iago was better received and was, like Macklin's, a masterly portrait in the 'natural' manner, with most of the villainy being conveyed during the soliloquies. He tried the main role for the last time at Covent Garden on 20 June 1746, with Macklin as Iago and Mrs Cibber as one of the best Desdemonas of the period.

Part of the reason for Garrick's abandonment of the play may well have been the accepted supremacy of Spranger Barry in the leading part. After his first performance at Drury Lane in October 1746, Barry was to be *the* Othello in twenty revivals for the next thirty years. Accounts of his playing are universally adulatory, and are matched only by Kean's notices in the next century. He possessed a marvellously mellifluous voice and a striking figure, both of which he used to project what seemed to his contemporaries the perfect fusion of dignity and love which grew under Iago's influence to a tempest of bloody passion, in which

you could observe the muscles stiffening, the veins distending, and the red blood boiling through his dark skin – a mighty flood of passion accumulating for several minutes – and at length, bearing down its barriers and sweeping onward in thunder, love, reason, mercy all before it.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the century another great actor, like Garrick, failed in the main role. John Philip Kemble's first Othello was at Drury Lane on 8 March 1785, with his sister Mrs Siddons as Desdemona, and his last was at Covent Garden in May 1805. With too much 'philosophy in his bearing and reason in his rage'<sup>2</sup> all his great strengths as a heroic actor seemed to count against him in this part. His looks and stature, his bodily mien and his rectilinear style were quite unsuited for the grieved Moor, whom he 'wrapped in a mantle of mysterious solemnity awfully predictive of his fate'.<sup>3</sup> The real surprise of the Kemble production was the Desdemona of Mrs Siddons who, being the greatest Lady Macbeth, was never expected to produce her gracious, sympathetic, strong, dignified and sweetly tender Venetian girl.

During the nineteenth century the text of *Othello* underwent extensive bowdlerisation in the theatre as in the printed versions. There were two main types of stage interpretation of the title role: the restrained, dignified, deeply troubled and sometimes intellectual Moor; and the blazing portrait of torrential sexual passion and wild jealousy. Macready, Fechter and Irving all offered variants of the quiet Othello. Macready's playing oscillated between the old grand manner and the new 'naturalistic' modern style that was becoming popular under French influence. It was with an Othello acted exclusively in this French style that Fechter amazed London audiences. His deliberately assumed conversational tone, his monotonous delivery and his obtrusive theatrical tricks militated against any real grasp of the massive passion that the role requires.

Irving's attempts at the part, particularly the production with Ellen Terry as a brilliant Desdemona and Booth as Iago, were a resounding commercial success, but he himself knew that the role had defeated him. Like Garrick, his appearance was

<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg, *Masks of Othello*, pp. 45–6.

<sup>2</sup> J. Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble*, 2 vols., 1825, 1, 292.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



against him. Slight of build, weak of voice and delicately featured, he replaced the grandeur and dignity of the original with domestic detail; and he tried to convey passion and grief by outbursts that struck his fellow-actors as petulant ranting. As Ellen Terry remarked, his reading of the character had no emotional centre, no build-up of passion, no strength.

The best Moor in the 'restrained' tradition during the nineteenth century was probably Edwin Booth. Using the most expurgated of texts, he created a simple-hearted noble black gentleman, burying his palpable torment and occasional violent outbursts under waves of remorse and humane feeling. There was no animal fury or jealous rage even in the final scene, just a musically-voiced sacrificial priest tenderly punishing an errant soul.

None of these stars could begin to rival the two great Othellos of the period: Kean and Salvini. Kean's performance was universally admired and is the first of which we have a detailed contemporary analysis. He adopted a tawny rather than black make-up and managed to combine heart-breaking grief with jealousy amounting to insanity. For William Hazlitt it was 'the finest piece of acting in the world', and many other contemporaries were struck by the fact that it was not like acting at all: not simulation but revelation:<sup>1</sup>

there was all the fitful fever of the blood, the jealous madness of the brain: his heart seemed to bleed with anguish, while his tongue dropped broken, imperfect accents of woe.<sup>2</sup>

The role was notoriously interwoven with Kean's personal life. On 28 January 1825, only eleven days after his appearance as co-respondent in Alderman Cox's sensational divorce case, he appeared in the play and was hooted by the audience as he lamented Desdemona's supposed infidelity. And it was as Othello that he made his last exit on 25 March 1833. Mortally ill, he managed to get through the first two and a half acts up to the 'Farewell' speech, when he collapsed in the arms of his son Charles, who was his Iago, and was carried from the stage for ever.

Another actor's personal life was entangled with the main role in a rather more emotionally immediate fashion. Edwin Forrest, the American tragedian, based his whole conception and playing of the character on the extent to which it mirrored his own emotional state. In 1848, after ten years of marriage, he discovered that his wife was having an *affaire* with one George Jamieson and immediately started divorce proceedings. At the trial Mrs Forrest was found innocent and Forrest himself was convicted of adultery and ordered to pay alimony. He appealed against this judgement in vain for some eighteen years and became an embittered social outcast. Clearly he channelled this experience into his playing of Othello. A man of massive physique, he alternated the extraordinary power of his rages with a tender affectionateness, which became in the last act a self-pitying wavering between desire for revenge and longing for a lost love that apparently characterised his own life.

Kean's only real rival appeared later in the century in the person of the Italian Tommaso Salvini. His Moor was characterised by a frank erotic sensuality in the early

<sup>1</sup> B. Cornwall, *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 1835, pp. 85-6.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hazlitt, *Works*, ed. P. P. Howe, 1930-4, XVIII, 332.



*a* Edmund Kean (1814, 1832–3)



*b* Paul Robeson with Peggy Ashcroft (1930)



*c* Frederick Valk (1942)



*d* Laurence Olivier (1964)

scenes, which was replaced by an overwhelming grief, which was in turn succeeded by despair, agony and a final cataclysm of violence. The savagery he displayed in the murder scene scandalised English audiences of the 1870s:

he pounced upon [Desdemona], lifted her into the air, dashed with her . . . across the stage and through the curtains, which fell behind him. You heard a crash as he flung her on the bed and growls as if of a wild beast over his prey.<sup>1</sup>

But for Henry James it was 'impossible to imagine anything more living, more tragic, more suggestive of a tortured soul and of a generous, beneficent strength changed to a purpose of destruction. With its tremendous force, it . . . has not a touch of rant or crudity.'<sup>2</sup> The first naturally black Othello appeared about this time, Ira Aldridge, an American Negro who was in real life married to a white woman. Rather against the general expectation that he would be barbaric and primitive, he was actually solemnly intense and was often condemned as too intellectual, though he did emphasise his colour, as in his famous point of slowly enclosing Desdemona's white hand in his dark one.

The role of Iago received more attention in the Victorian period than it had previously, and much thought was given to his motivation and the ways in which his inner villainy and outer honesty could be made plausible on the stage. Kean had stressed the villain's jocular, hearty, likeable exterior but managed to suggest also

an overactivity of mind that is dangerous to himself and others; that so far from hating his fellow-creatures, he is perfectly regardless of them, except as they may afford him food for the exercise of his spleen.<sup>3</sup>

The failed Othellos – Fechter, Macready and Irving – were also notable Iagos. The first two followed Kean's conception, with Fechter using a great deal of stagy business to show the two faces of a polished Venetian courtier, and Macready combining bluff soldierliness with a vigorous, many-sided deviltry. Irving's performance was considered one of his best for the stark contrast he managed between the outer heartiness and the inner vindictiveness. He never failed to thrill audiences with his celebrated piece of business when he covered his face completely with his hands and then slowly drew them downwards to reveal an expression of satanic glee as his plot takes shape in his brain. Booth was the most widely admired Iago of his time. He somehow convinced the spectators of his intangible glow of evil, while being outwardly gravely sympathetic and respectfully watchful. The force of his wickedness accumulated slowly, almost completely concealed, until it finally burst out in demonic joy as he pointed at the dead bodies on the bed.

At the start of the present century two actors played the leading role with great commercial success. Forbes-Robertson, despite the admiration he commanded, was thought to fall short of the power that Kean and Salvini brought to the part, and he acted in the play only twice in his career. Oscar Ashe's Othello had more animal fury, but the poetry and spiritual agony that Robertson so markedly possessed quite eluded

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Towse, *Sixty Years of the Theatre*, 1916, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scenic Art*, 1957, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> Hazlitt, *Works*, xviii, 201.



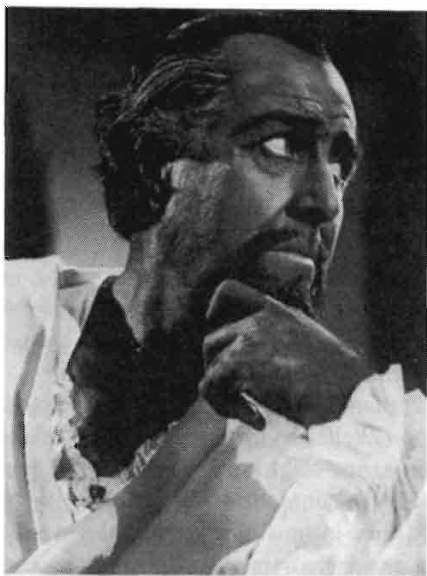
*a* Spranger Barry (c. 1775)



*b* Tommaso Salvini (1875)



*c* Johnston Forbes-Robertson (1901)



*d* Godfrey Tearle (1948-9)

him. Most of their successors were lacking in passionate intensity and murderous violence. The words 'Northern' and 'intellectual' were the ones used to describe a number of performances of the 1920s and 1930s which struck spectators as being reductive of the stature of the hero: they were of small ordinary men in distress rather than of giants under torture.

Some of the best-remembered Othellos of the first half of the twentieth century were those who conveyed the majestic, dignified and romantic aspects of the character: they were the deeply-grieved and highly-civilised gentlemen-poets. Abraham Sofaer's Moor at the Old Vic in 1935 is described in terms that would have amazed the fans of Salvini:

At first what he seeks is lucidity and a firm establishment of Othello as a man of tenderness and reason...not wishing to foam at the mouth, he is a little too cold...His performance is masterly, alike in its unsurpassed use of language and in the flowing urgency of its thought.<sup>1</sup>

Wilfred Walter's portrayal at Stratford-upon-Avon and London was in the same mould: dominating nobility and beautiful tenderness in the early scenes and a plunge into degradation that is preceded by a hesitation as he realises with horror what he is doing, and then a return to love at the end.

It was, however, Godfrey Tearle who between 1921 and 1950 perfected this reading of the character. His immensely dignified stage presence, consummate classical technique and emotional power all impressed audiences and critics alike. His Moor was a natural leader whose graceful movements and musical rendering of the great set speeches drew sympathy and admiration. While he passed rapidly from strong masculine tenderness to deadly rage, he

holds what is savage in the Moor severely in check and when he comes to smother Desdemona compels us to the Coleridgean view that jealousy is less the point of Othello's passion than an agony that the creature whom he believed angelic should prove impure and worthless.<sup>2</sup>

The most recent example of the 'Tearle Othello' was John Neville's civilised, intellectual performance which was remarkable for the poignancy of his grief and the haunting way in which he evoked the sweetness of his love with the pain of his recollections. He alternated the main role with Richard Burton, who was able to develop an energy that suggested a barbaric and uncontrolled passion in the Salvini tradition.

Perhaps the two most outstanding modern exponents of the violent Othello were Orson Welles and Frederick Valk. Both of these actors had imposing physiques and dominating stage personalities. Valk's performance was emotionally highly charged and his Moor was the least reluctant to be tempted; he seemed to embrace greedily all Iago's insinuations, so that the rapid fall was harrowing but never touching. It was the melodramatic in Welles's portrayal that struck most critics. His gantised costume, his exaggerated gestures and the insistent sexuality created an initial impression of extraordinary power, as though Welles, 'a great, lumbering, dazed bull',

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 22 January 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 20 June 1949.

were enveloped on stage in a 'dreadful fog of menace and horror'.<sup>1</sup> But his quiet sonorousness aroused sympathy rather than pity and one could not help 'wondering why a man who appears to be both shrewd and self-controlled should suddenly start behaving very unreasonably'.<sup>2</sup> Only one modern actor has attempted a synthesis of the dignity and the passion, the tenderness and the violence. Anthony Quayle's portrait possessed an assurance in both parts of the play so that the nobility and savagery were equally plain and never allowed to cancel each other out.

Three remarkable black actors have followed Ira Aldridge's pioneering appearance. Earle Hyman imposed himself on the whole play, becoming 'the storm centre... carrying the whirlwind with him and letting Iago buzz busily at the vulnerable edges';<sup>3</sup> and James Earle Jones was similarly strong and authoritative in the early scenes and reached heights of jealousy amounting to madness later. Paul Robeson was the outstanding black Othello and one of the most vividly remembered of all actors of the role, with some experienced theatregoers thinking that they were seeing the play for the first time. He made full use of his physical attributes and vocal endowment to give a noble plainness to the hero who was 'physically powerful with the gentleness that often accompanies great strength'.<sup>4</sup> Most of his admirers noted the consciousness of race in Robeson's performance, which for some gave it a seriousness of purpose that made all others seem trivial, but for others militated against the tragic sense of the original.

By far the most successful Othello of recent years has been Laurence Olivier's. The basis of his interpretation was the idea that the hero is essentially narcissistic and self-dramatising. With his careful imitation of West Indian gait and gesture, his heavily Negroid make-up and his self-regarding sensuousness and alienation, this actor produced a virtuoso solo performance of astonishing vocal inventiveness that etched a portrait of a primitive man, at odds with the sophisticated society into which he has forced himself, relapsing into barbarism as a result of hideous misjudgement.

There have been a number of distinguished modern Iagos, some building on the Victorian advances made in playing the role. For example, Richard Burton at the Old Vic in 1956 followed Kean's and Booth's lead and so embodied sincerity that 'not by the least wink or snicker does his outward action demonstrate the native act and figure of his heart';<sup>5</sup> and Emrys James at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1971 was a later version: 'an army lad whose high jinks can turn to calculated vice at the drop of a handkerchief'.<sup>6</sup>

More originally, some actors have endowed the Ensign with characteristics derived from modern clinical psychology. Jose Ferrer, Robeson's Iago, played a motiveless villain in a brilliant technical performance that was 'credible only to the extent to which we are led to fall in with his cerebral excitement, his non-moral temperament and magnetism, and his enjoyment of his own self and his own variety'.<sup>7</sup> Also in America, Alfred Drake played the part with a manically obsessive malice, and Mitchell

<sup>1</sup> *New Statesman and Nation*, 27 October 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 July 1957.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 25 February 1956.

<sup>4</sup> *New Republic*, 1 November 1943.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spectator*, 26 October 1951.

<sup>6</sup> *Theatre Arts* 27 (December 1943), 701.

<sup>7</sup> *The Guardian*, 11 September 1972.



9a Edmund Kean as Iago (1814)



9b Jose Ferrer as Iago (1943)



9c Sarah Siddons as Desdemona (1785)



9d Ellen Terry as Desdemona (1881)

Ryan was an even more sick creature hinting at the Ancient's twisted mind with small half-completed gestures. Leo McKern, Quayle's Iago, was similarly psychopathic, bustling and enormously self-assured as he went about the mad business that is the Ensign's life. Some actors have attempted to give stage life to the subconscious homosexuality that certain critics have detected as his 'real' motive. Most remarkable in this regard was Olivier's Iago, when he played opposite Richardson in 1935; he was clearly in love with Othello and covered his longing with a joky malignity.

In looking back over the play's stage history to date, it would appear that the central role is not one that calls for great innovation or ingenious new approaches. It demands rather an actor who can combine apparently contradictory character traits into a wholeness which audiences find credible, who can hit upon that magical satisfying balance that in their different ways Betterton, Kean, Barry, Salvini, Robeson and Tearle all possessed for their times.

When one considers certain aspects of *Othello* – its sexual intensity, its exotic content, its powerfully expressed emotional states, its starkly contrasted moral oppositions – there can be no surprise that it should have attracted the attention of two of the greatest composers of Italian opera: Gioacchino Rossini and Giuseppe Verdi.

Rossini's *Otello* (1816), though seldom performed today, was considered a masterpiece in its time, and was revolutionary in being the first Italian opera to equip its recitatives with full orchestral accompaniment rather than that of the single keyboard. In the first two acts the librettist took great liberties with the original. In an echo of Cinthio, Iago becomes a rejected suitor of Desdemona, and Shakespeare's cowardly Roderigo is transformed into so ardent a lover that he actually fights a duel with Othello, whose heroic stature is debased in the opera to that of a rather whining and irritable tenor. The handkerchief, in conformity to the operatic conventions of the time, is replaced by a lock of hair enclosed in a love-letter of Desdemona's that is intercepted and wrongly interpreted owing to its lacking a proper address. The third act, however, follows the final scenes of the play with more fidelity and is generally considered much superior musically to the rest of the work, with an exquisite setting of the Willow Song and an interpolated final prayer by Desdemona of the highest quality.

It is, of course, Verdi's opera which has had, since its first triumphant performance at La Scala in 1887, a history of stage performances as distinguished as that of the play itself. Composed forty years after his *Macbeth* and six years before his *Falstaff*, *Otello* is rightly considered his masterpiece and one of the three or four most profound works in the whole of the operatic repertoire.

Verdi was fortunate in having as his librettist Arrigo Boito, who was not only a famous poet but also a composer in his own right.<sup>1</sup> His text is a remarkable feat of necessary compression, the play's 3500 lines being reduced to 800. To achieve this he drastically cut the roles of Cassio, Roderigo and Emilia, and dropped Bianca altogether. The play's Venetian scenes are omitted, so that the opera can begin with

<sup>1</sup> *Mefistofele* (first perf. 1868); *Nerone* (first perf. 1924).



the crowd in Cyprus awaiting the triumphal landing of Otello. This excision not only enabled the focus to be placed on the main conflict between the three protagonists, but allowed Boito to work some of the play's first-act material into later scenes with telling musical effect. For instance, Iago's manipulation of Roderigo (1.3) and his bitterness at Cassio's promotion (1.1) are woven into the opera after Otello's arrival; and Othello's speech, 'Keep up your bright swords' (1.2.59), makes its appearance in the opera as he quells the brawl caused by Cassio's drunken behaviour. Perhaps the most remarkable example of this kind of transposition is the love duet with which the first act ends. In Verdi's hands the long quasi-conversational musical interplay, of which he was already a master, becomes a vocal re-enactment of the love soon to be wrecked, the expression of which contains the details of its origin, that Shakespeare dramatises in 1.1-1.3 of his play.

Some of the other changes made by Boito may be mentioned briefly. Iago sows the first seeds of doubt in Otello's mind before Desdemona's pleading for Cassio's reinstatement, thus allowing for a more rapid growth of the jealousy. The handkerchief is picked up by Emilia and seized by Iago while Otello and Desdemona are present. The serenade of Desdemona by the country people is placed later so as to provide an ironical musical comment on the early stages of Iago's temptation. Iago's soliloquies are compressed into his famous aria 'Credo in un Dio che m'ha creato simile a sè' in the second act. The final act fuses several of the play's scenes and makes both cuts and additions. Emilia's prattle about infidelity (4.3) is cut out; the play's Willow Song is stripped of much of its ironical application; and Desdemona is given a remarkable *Ave Maria* to sing before the statue of the Virgin immediately before Otello's entrance.

There is no doubt that Boito sacrificed much of what makes the play rich. For example, the dense poetic texture of the dialogue, many of the most memorable lines and much of the psychological shading of the characters are largely gone. Verdi's score makes no effort to restore these aspects of the play by musical means; rather it offers us an operatic equivalent of the experience that the play contains. The thrilling orchestral evocation of the storm before the first act gives aural reality to the symbolic weight of separation and prognosticated discord that the tempest-tossed voyage to Cyprus has in the play. The celebratory music of the chorus in Act 1 and its climax in Otello's opening words, 'Esultate! l'orgoglio musulmans sepolto è in mar', serve to suggest the heroic stature that his verbal music endows him with in the play. The quartet which constitutes the handkerchief scene in the opera allows for a simultaneous unfolding of the psychological levels of interaction not possible in the play, as the mezzo-soprano and the baritone voices dispute the possession of the ocular proof, and the soprano begs forgiveness for her transgression and the tenor voices his fears about his blackness and his age.

Other musical effects result from the interplay of the solo voices and their setting against larger vocal units. The chorus supplies the backdrop of jubilation at the arrival of the embassy from Venice for the tenor-baritone duet that plots Desdemona's death. The play's overhearing scene is a brilliant trio shot through with complex ironies that inhabit the differing levels of awareness of the three singers. The people's voices in the distance sing their salute to the 'Lion of Venice' as on stage Iago flicks his foot

at the body of the unconscious Otello with the words, 'Ecco il Leone!' Perhaps most poignant of all are the musical echoes which perform something of the same function as the allusive imagery in the play, such as Otello's final kiss, 'Un bacio, un bacio ancora, un altro bacio', while the orchestra recalls the motif of the first-act love duet.

As one distinguished musicologist has rightly said: '*Otello* is the only opera to challenge a Shakespearean tragedy and emerge undimmed by the comparison.'<sup>1</sup>

The title role of the opera makes special demands because of the combination of acting and vocal skill required, so that many of the greatest tenors have not been able to count it among their triumphs. Of the older generation of singers Tamagno, the first Otello, was the leading exponent until his death. Up to the Second World War Zenatello and Slezak and later Martinelli were internationally acclaimed for their performances; and, more recently, outstanding interpreters of the role have included Vinay, del Monaco, Vickers, McCracken and Domingo. Among the sopranos who have been successful as Desdemona are Tetrizzini, Eames, Rethberg, Caniglia, Tebaldi, Scotto and Te Kanawa; and memorable Iagos have been sung by Maurel, Kraus, Tibbett, Scotti, Biasini, McNeill and Milnes.

There is a third opera based upon the play – that composed by A. Machavariani which was given its first performance in Tbilisi in 1963. The London theatre of the 1960s spawned another kind of musical version, the 'rock opera' entitled *Catch My Soul!*, which raised two interesting questions: why anyone should want to do it; and being done why anyone should wish to hear it.

<sup>1</sup> W. Dean, 'Verdi's *Otello*: a Shakespearian masterpiece', *S.Sur.* 21 (1968), 96.

Criticism and productions of *Othello* since 1984, by Scott McMillin, Cornell University

*Political Othellos*

New pressures broke in upon *Othello* in the 1980s and '90s, disrupting what has often been regarded as the most private of Shakespeare's tragedies and forcing it outward to confront current issues of racial and sexual politics.

Key events in both scholarship and theatre took place in the heartland of racial oppression, South Africa, in the later 1980s. Martin Orkin's *Shakespeare Against Apartheid*, published in Johannesburg in 1987, argued that Shakespeare scholarship and teaching in South Africa were outdated affairs, harking back to British Imperialist assumptions and serving to prop up the apartheid regime. Shakespeare was being turned to use in the oppression of black people, Orkin insisted, and South African Shakespeare scholars were paying no attention to the political liberalization of English and American criticism since the 1960s. Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Dollimore and Sinfield's *Political Shakespeare*, Catherine Belsey's *Critical Practice*, John Drakakis's *Alternative Shakespeares* – these were the books making a difference in the English-speaking world, and none of them was receiving attention in South Africa. The famous critics from earlier in the century, who *were* being attended to, could be quoted to reveal racist assumptions – a point Orkin demonstrated with passages from Bradley, Ridley, and Leavis.

We must 'start with awareness of ourselves, situated as we are in a semi-industrialized, capitalist, *apartheid* state, during a period of crisis and collapse', Orkin wrote (p. 19), rejecting the notion that *Othello* should be read as a 'timeless' or 'universal' comment on human nature. In this light, Iago is evil because he is a racist and recognizable among the managers of the apartheid regime. In its 'fine scrutiny of the mechanisms underlying Iago's use of colour prejudice, and in its rejection of human pigmentation as a means of identifying worth, the play, as it always has done, continues to oppose racism' (p. 117).

At nearly the same time, Janet Suzman, a white South African actress well known in England, undertook a startling production of *Othello* at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg – startling because it had a black South African actor, John Kani, playing the title role. This was dangerous theatre. In apartheid South Africa, black actors did not play roles in which they seemed to kiss or strangle white women, but Kani and Suzman were determined to use Shakespeare to force racial issues into the political spotlight, and their international reputations made it difficult for the government to prevent them. Moreover, Joanna Weinberg as Desdemona worked together with Kani's *Othello* to create what one observer called 'a private sexuality as mysterious as it was transgressive' (Ford, 157). Thus the production was charged with racial and sexual currents, exactly the two issues prominent in the newest Shakespeare scholarship. The production was widely reviewed and videotaped, and together with the Orkin book it brought what had come to be known as 'post-colonial Shakespeare' into sharp focus in Johannesburg during the final years of the apartheid regime.

Political Shakespeare was also a vigorous movement in post-colonial and third world countries in the 1980s and '90s. 'No work of Shakespeare touches the chords of Arab sensibility and identity so much as the tragedy of *Othello*', wrote Ferial Ghazoul in 1998, noting that the characters had become household names in some places: a dark Arab is an 'Othello'; an innocent woman, a 'Desdemona'; a marriage-wrecker, an 'Iago'. *Al-Ghirah al-qatilah* ('Murderous Jealousy'), an Egyptian film of 1983 directed by 'Atif Al-Tayib, turned the plot into a story of upwardly-mobile urban Egyptians and brought about a happy ending. Quite a different version was Mahmud Isma'il Jad's Upper Egypt rural drama called 'Atallah (an Arabized form of 'Othello'), first played in the later 1960s, and revived in 1991. Desdemona is now Fatimah, who has been helped financially by the older and illiterate 'Atallah, but is supposed to marry her first cousin, Hassan (Cassio). This is a form of total theatre for rural Egypt, replete with chorus, religious chants in honour of the Prophet, a traditional story-teller, folk songs, and exchanges with the audience (at one point near the crisis, 'Atallah asks the spectators what they think).<sup>1</sup>

An Iraqi play of 1989, *Desdemona*, by Yusuf al-Sayigh, made the plot into a murder mystery with a Rashomon effect (multiple points of view render the facts uncertain). Confessions and accusations captured on hidden tapes in an investigation chamber show that everyone is responsible for Desdemona's death – in a police state, the entire network is guilty.

In India, where Shakespeare held immense cultural power in the days of the empire, scenes from *Othello* were in 1996 adapted into Kathakali, a traditional dance-drama form using formalized gestures, heavy costumes, and mask-like makeup. At about the same time, Salman Rushdie published *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a novel laced with *Othello* references. An Indian scholar, Ania Loomba, brought a feminist focus to the post-colonial discussion of *Othello* by insisting that the recurring violence against women in Renaissance drama could be seen in the same light as recurring violence against women in contemporary Indian society. Race should be seen as one of a series of interlocking forms of oppression, Loomba argued, gender and class being the others. Desdemona was the victim of this interlocking system. Although she may seem to stand on the side of security in regard to class and race, her gender makes her helpless in the isolation of Cyprus, where she is nothing but Othello's property and therefore twice vulnerable. As *he* falls victim to racism, she falls victim to him – or more exactly, to the system of patriarchal Christian misogyny to which he has subscribed.

### *New Historicism, Feminism, Cultural Materialism*

Both Loomba in Delhi, writing about violence against women, and Orkin in Johannesburg, writing about racism in the educational system, were influenced by Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), a founding text of the New Historicism. Greenblatt saw Othello as the victim of Christian teachings about excessive sexuality, which some Church Fathers warned could be adulterous even within marriage. The tragedy 'is less a manifestation of some atavistic "blackness" specific to

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of these Arab versions and others, see Ghazoul, 'The Arabization of *Othello*'.

Othello than a manifestation of the colonial power of Christian doctrine over sexuality', Greenblatt wrote (241–2). Desdemona's frank sexual interest in Othello can be made to seem excessive – exactly what Iago does as he improvises a false narrative for Othello to believe.

This argument has seemed right but not *exactly* right to feminist critics. It turns Desdemona's sexuality into a contest of male narratives – the Christian narrative, Iago's narrative, eventually Othello's narrative – and feminism has reason to believe that the oppression of women is more direct than that. For Loomba, for example, it is not a *narrative* mistake that causes the tragedy, but direct applications of racial and sexual prejudice. Another influential feminist book, Karen Newman's *Fashioning Femininity in Renaissance Drama*, gave a deconstructive turn to Greenblatt's argument. Noting the assumption of a 'moment of black identity prior to discourse' in Greenblatt's reasoning, Newman argued that Othello's blackness originates *in* his narratives to Desdemona and is therefore grounded on his relationship to the feminine. And his relationship to the feminine is bound to cause psychic trouble. In a male-centred world where 'ocular proof' is demanded even by those who invent themselves in tall tales, the non-specular feminine listener becomes a source of male anxiety. 'Greedy' in her listening as the male perceives it, she is a devouring threat in the diseased male imagination, and must be punished.

Cultural Materialism has joined the New Historicism, its cousin, in making *Othello* an absorbing political topic. Alan Sinfield's *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (1992) held firmly to the view that racism is at the heart of the play. Othello falls victim to the strident prejudice which helps to found the dominant Venetian culture. By the end, 'Othello "recognizes" himself as what Venetian culture has really believed him to be: an ignorant, barbaric outsider . . . Venice hails Othello as a barbarian, and he acknowledges that it is he they mean' (p. 31). The hero as victim is a theme running through the various political approaches. The 'noble Moor' of nineteenth- and earlier twentieth-century criticism has become harder to find. As Othello and Desdemona have come to seem trapped to many readers, the question has arisen as to whether there is any hope for change in the interlocking oppressions of which the traps consist. The South African ventures of Orkin in the educational system and Suzman and Kani in the theatre would have been pointless without an attendant belief that systems of oppression can be changed, and the ending of the apartheid regime in the 1990s seemed a real turning point. But the New Historicism lingers over the notion that subversion will always be slipped into containment by the existing power structure – indeed, the structure gains its power from having subversion to contain. This ironic fatalism may help to explain why the New Historicism itself came to be so richly contained under Greenblatt's General Editorship in *The Norton Shakespeare*, a recent Complete Works edition for the student market.

### *Critical responses and the issue of casting*

The readings I have mentioned are frankly political, and especially in the post-colonial and feminist groups they are set forth by writers devoted to lifting forms of

oppression which they have observed and felt in the contemporary world. The task of criticism is to 'reconstitute' the text, Newman insists, so as to unravel the male white interests which gave rise to the play and its canonical readings in the first place. Reactions to these ideological positions were certainly to be expected, and two of the most substantial responses came from Graham Bradshaw, in *Misrepresentations: Shakespeare and the Materialists* (1993), and Edward Pechter, in *Othello and Interpretive Traditions* (1999). Greenblatt was practising a narrow criticism, Bradshaw said, one focussed on 'a diagnostic analysis of Othello's character' (p. 191) and devoted to making *Othello* reflect despicable Christian beliefs that could be found only in a highly selective reading of all texts involved. Pechter also took the materialists to task over 'Character', which turns out to be the operative critical category even among readers urged on by a theoretical belief that no such thing exists (pp. 186–9). Newman's feminist reading of *Othello*, Bradshaw noted, was driven by an ideological desire to reduce the play to what were taken to be the racist and sexist standards of Renaissance culture. Overlooked in these and other political readings for both Pechter and Bradshaw is the structure of *Othello* the play itself, which viewed in its fullness contains complexities of dramatic intention not to be swept away by ideological broom-swinging.

While performances of *Othello* were being aimed at the play's relevance to post-colonialism in much of the former British Empire, productions in England and America were caught up in the politics of casting. Black actors came to feel that the title role was theirs to play as a testing ground for talent and identity. The days when white actors could 'black up' for the role had virtually vanished. Olivier's famous performance of 1964 came under attack for its stereotyping of West Indian attributes. When it was made into a film, some commentators were quick to note that Olivier's black makeup smudged Desdemona's face in the death scene (Murray, p. 109). This, together with some stage gestures which seemed stereotypical in film close-ups, made the most famous performance by a white actor in the twentieth century seem out-of-date and a bit embarrassing. Other white actors did not fare well either. A much anticipated performance by Paul Scofield in 1980, the first *Othello* to be played in the London theatre named for Olivier, proved disappointing, and the oddly 'pinkface' production starring Anthony Hopkins and directed by Jonathan Miller for the BBC Shakespeare series seemed merely irrelevant to the pressing interests of the day. One blackface performance, however, Gert Voss's in Vienna, 1991, managed to win wide acclaim, in part because the makeup was intentionally *made* to rub onto the other characters, an indication that white Venice was soiled by the repressed racism that made *Othello* an exotic and dangerous outsider (Carlson, 1993).

The argument on behalf of reserving the role for black actors – aside from the incontrovertible point that there are precious few leading roles for them in the drama of the English-speaking world – hinges on the controversial idea that one had to have lived through the experience of a black man in a racist society to be able to play *Othello* to the full. This idea has been challenged by some commentators, although not by many black actors. Theatre consists of imaginative performers pretending to be *other* than they are, it is argued. The role was first written for a white actor (Richard

Burbage) to play in black-face – shouldn't the original intentions matter today? And why should black men feel that their personal experience would prepare them for a character who murders his wife in a fit of delusion? One prominent black actor, Hugh Quarshie, has indeed suggested that the role is inappropriate for black actors because they give authenticity to Shakespeare's own racial stereotyping of the role (Quarshie, 1999).

But the other argument has Paul Robeson behind it, and Paul Robeson is hard to deny. Norman Sanders has described Robeson's Othello performances in the introduction to this volume, but it can be added that the past twenty-five years have consolidated the reputation of this magnetic performer and made his Othello seem a living presence even for actors who could not have seen him at first hand (Robeson was recorded but not filmed in the role). And the Robeson Othello owed much of its strength to the actor's experience of racism as a black man in white America.<sup>1</sup> The post-colonial use of Shakespeare described above and the civil rights movements in North America and England have also helped set the role apart for black actors. Not the least of the relevant factors is the presence of many well-trained black actors in the centres of English-speaking theatre, men for whom Othello beckons as a major artistic challenge. It is now a black actor's role.

Among the many who have essayed the role in the past twenty-five years, James Earl Jones and Willard White deserve special notice. Both were conscious of following in the tradition laid down by Robeson. Jones had played the role seven times between 1956 and 1982. One would like to say that his final effort was his most memorable, in part because the production moved to Broadway for a highlighted run, but Christopher Plummer playing Iago found it possible to tap notions of cynicism and absurdity current in the New York theatre to the point of stealing the show. Several reviewers felt Iago's anguish more keenly than Othello's or Desdemona's, and the critic for *The New Yorker*, Brendan Gill, was pleased that Iago succeeded in demolishing the lovers (Potter, 2002, p. 163) Jones's Othello was noble and articulate, a Spanish Moor from a world free of racism, a superior man. Perhaps this was not the contemporary image for the play by 1982. In the opening performances in Stratford, Connecticut, Iago ended the play by rising from the floor to wave his sash in the air and laugh in triumph. (This bit was removed by the time of the move to Broadway.)

Trevor Nunn directed Willard White in the title-role for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1989, in the final production at the original Other Place before it was renovated. Nunn had directed a famous production of *Macbeth* with Ian McKellen and Judi Dench at the Other Place in 1976, and now he returned to the tin-shed theatre and gained another memorable performance from McKellen, this time as an obsessively tidy Iago, a career military man who maintained a chilly detachment toward the successful engineering of his murderous plot. (Both Nunn productions are available on videotape.)

<sup>1</sup> Robeson's performance is central to Lois Potter's *Othello* volume in the Shakespeare in Performance series published by Manchester University Press. I am indebted to the author for letting me read several chapters of this book before publication. I should also like to thank A. R. Braummuller, Brian Gibbons, Gary Taylor, and Herbert and Judith Weil for advice about *Othello* productions and related matters.



10 Imogen Stubbs as Desdemona and Willard White as Othello in the Trevor Nunn RSC production, *The Other Place*, 1989. (photo: Joe Cocks Studio)

Nunn took a risk in casting White, an opera singer who had never played Shakespeare, for the title-role. The decision worked well. Othello played by an actor with an operatic sense of stage presence was a good idea in the first place, and White's effort at mastering blank verse, noticeable among the highly trained RSC company, created an extra edge to Othello's alienation among the Venetians. The actor was a bit

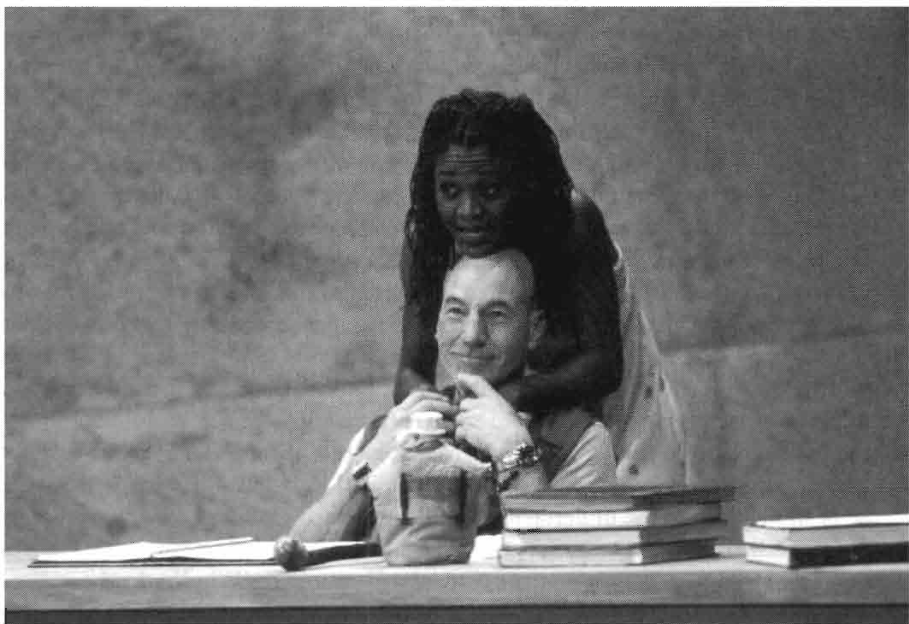


out of place, like the hero, and in both cases he was engaged in mastering a difficulty which could turn on him. Robeson was certainly a presence behind White – another singer untrained in Shakespeare who commanded attention. The white Moorish robe worn by the hero in the murder scene was a deliberate recollection of Robeson's costume.

The production, designed by Bob Crowley, used the bare decor of *The Other Place* to create a spare but detailed military environment. For the Venetian scenes, the stage was covered with Persian carpets piled on top of one another (McKellen's Iago was constantly straightening these). When the setting changed to Cyprus, the carpets were replaced with a square of canvas layered with sand, which 'sounded like sandpaper as the actors' shoes scraped across it' (Kennedy, 1993, p. 255). This arid world was dominated by military codes, and Iago was in his element. No one was quite sure which military this was, though. The costuming was non-Elizabethan but deliberately ambiguous. Reviewers thought of the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War, and others – nineteenth-century wars, in any case.

What was not ambiguous was the treatment of the women. Bianca was played by a black actress, to show up Cassio's double standard in racial terms – idealizing the fair Desdemona and satisfying his lust with a black woman. Emilia (Zoe Wanamaker) was obviously a battered wife. Desdemona (Imogen Stubbs) could be demure or flirtatious depending on the occasions presented to her, and when *she* became the battered wife, she fought back, escaping from the bed to the locked door in the final scene, then crouching, scratching, having to be carried by her murderer back to the bed and there strangled. The production was immediate and vivid. Several reviewers were moved to write about sexual abuse.

What was called the 'photo-negative' production of *Othello* – a white Othello playing against a cast of blacks in the other speaking parts – was produced by the Shakespeare Company in Washington, DC in 1997. A similar idea had been staged in London by the Deconstruction Theatre Company in Kensington in 1992, but the Washington cast was headed by an international star, Patrick Stewart, who had become famous through his performances in the *Star Trek* series on television, and the actor's renown rather took the edge off the racial politics of the production. (Stewart is also an experienced Shakespearean actor, but outside of England he is best known for his *Star Trek* performances.) The black actors, headed by Ron Canada as Iago and Patrice Johnson as Desdemona, were a young and vigorous company, but none had Stewart's aura of fame conditioned by the invulnerability of his spaceship character. If this white Othello was an outsider because of his race, played by Stewart he was the ultimate insider because of the security of the career behind the role. Thus Stewart was convincing about Othello's exotic background, and his performance was marked by a good-humoured approach to the age difference between him and the very young Desdemona, but the aim of showing a white man suffering from vulnerability in a black society did not quite come across. As one of the actors noted, it couldn't come across in the audience either, so long as white spectators outnumbered black spectators, which was always the case (Potter, p. 184).



11 Patrick Stewart as Othello and Patrice Johnson as Desdemona in The Shakespeare Theatre's 1997 production, directed by Jude Kelly (photo: Carol Rosegg)

### *Recent film and television*

A widely distributed film version of 1995, directed by Oliver Parker, with Laurence Fishburne as Othello and Kenneth Branagh as Iago, presented a hero in command of himself in every way save one: he was given to powerful sexual fantasies of a kind only a film-maker can deliver. Ocular proof of his wife's infidelity is what Shakespeare's hero demands, and ocular proof is what this Othello gets, as he parts his bedcurtains with his sword and finds Desdemona and Cassio making love and then mocking him when they realize who is looking on. This is a fantasy of Othello's, of course, but we are looking on too. Other sexual fantasies are there for the eye of the beholder, who also has an opportunity to see what is apparently not a fantasy, the lovemaking of Othello and Desdemona on their first night together after marriage. Films cannot resist showing the consummation of the relationship, it appears (see below), thus settling an issue which is left undecided in Shakespeare's text.

Adaptations of the story continue to be made. An American film called simply *O*, directed by Tim Blake Nelson, revised the action to suit basketball players at a Southern preparatory school. Othello (Mekhi Phifer) was the black star recruited to win championships for the school, Iago (Josh Hartnett) was the power-forward overlooked in Othello's choice of Cassio as 'player of the year', and Desdemona (Julia Stiles) was the Dean's daughter whose virginity gave way in Othello's dorm room. England supplied a television adaption in which John Othello (Eamonn Walker) was a stellar black police officer suddenly raised to Commissioner of the Metropolitan

Police as the Establishment's answer to street-riots caused by police racism in the inner city. Although this Othello knew that his good friend Ben Jago (Christopher Eccleston) expected to be named Commissioner himself, he had no inkling that his sidekick might harbour resentment. Both productions were more convincing about the lovemaking between Desdemona and Othello than about the male trust-and-betrayal between Othello and Iago. The Othellos were young and good-looking, and the love scenes with equally attractive Desdemonas conveyed pride at breaking through any remaining taboos against inter-racial sex. But Othello's loss of faith in Desdemona was hard to believe now that his reactions to Iago's lies were reduced to ordinary prose. Gosh, these Othellos seemed to say, you mean she might be fooling around? Drugs were called upon to inflame the hero's imagination in the basketball story. In a nice touch, the policeman Othello found 'Michael Cass' wearing his own dressing gown in his own living-room with his own wife – much more than a misplaced handkerchief in this case – although the plot reached this discovery scene only with great strain. The real forms of racism detailed in both modernizations gave a sense of immediacy to the undertakings, and one wished that the scripts were not so bound to realistic prose. Does everything have to be explained when the medium is prose? The mystery of Iago's motives certainly disappeared. 'Why?' asks the policeman Othello when he realizes that Ben Jago has destroyed him. 'Because you took what is mine,' replied Ben, just where the Shakespearean character vows to remain silent.

### *Other persuasions*

In the face of the overtly politicized uses which *Othello* has served in the past thirty years, it is good to report that persuasive books can be written from other perspectives and still maintain a political groundwork for the play. Stanley Cavell's philosophical analysis of scepticism in *Othello*, first published in 1979, has been repositioned as a central essay in his *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (1987). Patricia Parker turned to *Othello* for some of her most extensive examinations of Shakespearean words and their implications (an essay in the collection *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, which she co-edited, another essay in *Women, 'Race', and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, which she also co-edited, and Chapter Seven of her *Shakespeare from the Margins*, 1996). Michael Neill has addressed *Othello* in the context of Renaissance meditations on death. These are all close-readings of the language of the play: such words as 'doubt' and 'prove' for Cavell, 'dilation' and 'dilatation' for Parker, 'show' and 'wrought' for Neill are linked with other terms and phrases across the text, as though taking Shakespeare literally is the way to proceed. My impression is that these are intensely political books – not because they study the play as though it were about politics but because they study its words in the belief that literature is about language at the same time as it is about race or gender or post-colonialism. A passion for language in its most intricate form is necessarily a passion for human society, which is linguistic and political at once.

*Texts: the Quarto*

Finally, the long-standing mystery of the two early *Othello* texts has been opened to new considerations. The Quarto of 1622, shorter by 160 lines than the First Folio of just a year later and differing in many details, has often been thought to have been printed from Shakespeare's own manuscript ('foul papers'). A substantial argument to this effect appears in the Third Arden *Othello*, edited by E. A. J. Honigmann (1997). Thanks in part to the new Cambridge series of Shakespeare Quartos, however, the possibility is now being made clear that some of the Shakespeare quartos, including *Othello*, represent the plays as they were performed in the theatre, perhaps even as they were spoken by the actors and recorded by dictation. The *Henry V* Quarto, edited by Andrew Gurr, and the *Othello* Quarto, edited by myself, are two examples of this textual possibility.

## NOTE ON THE TEXT

The text of this edition is based on a conflation of the 1622 quarto (Q1) and the First Folio of 1623 (F), which the present editor believes represent two Shakespearean versions of the play. The collations record the choices of readings made between Q1 and F, and give also the rejected readings in substantive and semi-substantive variants, lineation and punctuation when it seriously affects the sense. The origin of all emendations adopted from Q2 (1630), the later Folios (1632, 1664, 1685), and from eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century editions is always recorded; but other emendations or suggestions for emendation are only listed when they have been considered possible alternatives to the reading of the present text or when they are discussed in the Commentary or supplementary notes. The collations do not include corrections of obvious misprints, turned letters, broken type, simple expansions, or modernisations of spelling. In the format of the collations, the authority for this edition's reading follows immediately after the square bracket enclosing the quotation from the text. Other readings, if any, follow in chronological order. For a full discussion of Q1 and F and the evidence for and theories of their relationship, see the Textual Analysis, pp. 203–17 below.

*Othello*

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

OTHELLO, '*the Moor*', a general in the service of Venice

BRABANTIO, '*father to Desdemona*', a Venetian Senator

CASSIO, '*an honourable lieutenant*' to Othello

IAGO, '*a villain*', ensign to Othello

RODERIGO, '*a gulled gentleman*'

DUKE OF VENICE

SENATORS *of Venice*

MONTANO, '*Governor of Cyprus*'

GENTLEMEN '*of Cyprus*'

LODOVICO, a noble Venetian, kinsman of Brabantio

GRATIANO, a noble Venetian, brother of Brabantio

SAILORS

CLOWN, *servant of Othello*

DESDEMONA, '*wife to Othello*' and daughter of Brabantio

EMILIA, '*wife to Iago*'

BIANCA, '*a courtesan*', mistress of Cassio

MESSENGER

HERALD

OFFICERS

GENTLEMEN

MUSICIANS

ATTENDANTS

### Notes

This is one of the seven *dramatis personae* that appear at the end of plays in F, all of which seem designed to avoid having large areas of blank page. It may, therefore, have been made up in the printing-house. The descriptions of characters, here appearing in quotation marks, are those of F, which have been amplified following the practice of Rowe and later editors.

**OTHELLO, the Moor** It is not known where Shakespeare found the name, as the hero of Cinthio's story is called simply 'un Moro'. It is possible that the name was partly modelled on Thorello in Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and changed to suggest Othoman and the Ottoman Turks.

**CASSIO** In Cinthio's story Cassio is called 'un Capo di squadra' (= a corporal or captain).

**IAGO** In Cinthio's story the villain is called 'un Alfiero' (= an ensign). 'Iago' or 'Jago' is the Spanish form of 'James' and Shakespeare could have found the name in Holinshed's Catalogue of Kings in his *Chronicles* (1577).

**MONTANO**, Governor of Cyprus Montano is so described in 2.1 SD in Q1; but there is some confusion about his actual rank in the play. See Textual Analysis, p. 207 below.

**DESDEMONA** Called 'Disdemona' in Cinthio's story; reference is made in the discussion following the tale to the meaning of the name:  $\Delta\nu\sigma\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\upsilon\nu$  (= unfortunate).

# OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE

I.I *Enter* RODERIGO and IAGO.

RODERIGO Tush, never tell me, I take it much unkindly  
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse  
As if the strings were thine shouldst know of this.

IAGO 'Sblood, but you will not hear me.

If ever I did dream of such a matter,  
Abhor me.

5

RODERIGO Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.

IAGO Despise me if I do not: three great ones of the city,

In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,  
Off-capped to him; and by the faith of man,  
I know my price, I am worth no worse a place.  
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,  
Evades them with a bombast circumstance,  
Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,

10

List of characters] The Names of the Actors. F (following the text); not in Q1. The order of listing is that of F, material from which is enclosed in single quotation marks. BRABANTIO...Senator] Brabantio, Father to Desdemona. F; not in Q1 LODOVICO...GRATIANO...Venetian] Lodouico, and Gratiano, two Noble Venetians. F; not in Q1 Act I, Scene I 1.1] *Actus Primus. Scena Prima.* F; not in Q1 O SD RODERIGO and IAGO] F; Iago and Roderigo Q1 I Tush,] Q1; not in F 2 thou...hast] F; you...has Q1 4-6] Steevens; 'Sblood...me / ...me Q1; But you'll...dream / ...me F 4 'Sblood] Q1; not in F 7] Q1; Thou...me / ...hate F 8] Q1; Despise me / ...city F 10 Off-capped] F; Oft capt Q1

## Act 1, Scene 1

1 never tell me A common phrase expressing disbelief; as in American slang 'You don't say.'

3 this Usually taken to refer to Othello's marriage; but in view of Roderigo's reproach in 7 and Iago's detailed knowledge in 156-8, it would appear rather that Iago has just told Roderigo that Othello had informed him of his planned elopement.

4 'Sblood i.e. by Christ's blood; a very strong oath which F omits, in keeping with its policy of censoring the profanities that are found in Q1. See Textual Analysis, pp. 211-12 below.

7 him It is noticeable that Othello remains unnamed throughout the scene and is only identified for the first time at 33 as 'his Moorship'.

10 Off-capped Removed their hats as a sign of respect. Both this reading from F and Q1's 'Oft-capt' are defensible, but the sense of the passage indicates that the 'great ones' made their application to Othello on Iago's behalf on only one occasion, when they were told of Cassio's appointment. See supplementary note; see also 1.2.23 n. 'unbonneted'.

13 bombast circumstance rhetorically inflated circumlocution. Compare Iago's other comment on Othello's manner of speech at 2.1.212-14.

14 stuffed 'Bombast' was literally cotton material used for lining or padding garments.

14 epithets terms; with some suggestion here of technical military terminology.



And in conclusion, 15  
 Non-suits my mediators. For 'Certes', says he,  
 'I have already chosen my officer.'  
 And what was he?  
 Forsooth, a great arithmetician,  
 One Michael Cassio, a Florentine, 20  
 A fellow almost damned in a fair wife,  
 That never set a squadron in the field,  
 Nor the devison of a battle knows  
 More than a spinster, unless the bookish theoric,  
 Wherein the togèd consuls can propose 25  
 As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice  
 Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had the election,  
 And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof  
 At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds  
 Christian and heathen, must be lee'd and calmed 30

15 And in conclusion] Q1; not in F 17-18] *Pope*; one line, F, Q1 17 chosen] Q1; chose F 25 togèd] Q1; Tongued F  
 29 other] Q1; others F 30 Christian] Q1; Christen'd F 30 be lee'd] *conj. Heath*; be led Q1; be be-lead F

15 **And in conclusion** 'Conclusion' could be used as a legal term meaning 'a totally binding decision' (*OED sv sb* 13), which carries on the legal flavour of 'suit' at 9 and 'Non-suits' at 16.

16 **Non-suits** Causes a withdrawal of the petition of.

16 **Certes** Assuredly; probably a monosyllable here.

19 **arithmetician** Iago's sneer is that Cassio is a theoretical soldier with no practical experience of war, a point he develops at 21-6. Compare Mercutio's similar disdain of Tybalt's swordsmanship: 'he fights by the book of arithmetic' (*Rom.* 3.1.102). The allusion may also be to Cassio's having the ballistic expertise and skills of an artillery rather than an infantry officer.

20 **a Florentine** i.e. a foreigner, not a Venetian. See Cassio's use of his own countrymen as a standard of honesty at 3.1.38, and Iago's stress on his Venetian origin at 3.3.203-5, 5.1.89-91. There may also be a reference to the Florentines' fame as bankers and accountants which is taken up at 19 and 31.

21 **almost... wife** This has occasioned a great deal of comment. Most obviously it seems a version of the Italian proverb, 'l'hai tolta bella? tuo danno', or its English equivalent, 'Who has a fair wife needs more than two eyes' (Tilley w377); but in the play Cassio is clearly not married. It is possible that at

this point in the play's composition Shakespeare intended to have Cassio married, but later decided to use Bianca for the handkerchief episode. See p. 16 above, and supplementary note.

22 **set dispose, arrange.** A technical military term: see *OED sv v* 70.

22 **squadron** A small unit of troops, usually twenty-five men.

23 **devison of a battle** devising or planning of the movement of an army.

24 **spinster** This did not automatically mean a woman in Jacobean English; but, in view of Iago's misogyny, it probably does here.

24 **bookish theoric** textbook theory.

25 **togèd** i.e. dressed in an official gown or toga (like ancient Roman senators). F's 'tongued' has been defended as meaning 'prattling' (so that their soldiership like Cassio's is 'mere prattle'); but it is more likely that F's reading is a compositor's misinterpretation of his manuscript copy similar to that which produced 'woolvis tongue' for 'woolvish toge' in *Cor.* 2.3.115.

25 **propose** hold forth, expound.

27 **had the election** was selected.

29-30 **At Rhodes... heathen** This is the first reference to the crusading wars which are the background of the tragedy. See p. 10 above.

30 **be lee'd** A ship is in the lee when another ship stands between it and the wind and so prevents it

By debtor and creditor; this counter-caster,  
 He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,  
 And I, God bless the mark, his Moorship's ancient.

RODERIGO By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

IAGO Why, there's no remedy. 'Tis the curse of service; 35  
 Preferment goes by letter and affection,  
 Not by the old gradation, where each second  
 Stood heir to the first. Now sir, be judge yourself  
 Whether I in any just term am affined  
 To love the Moor.

RODERIGO I would not follow him then. 40

IAGO O sir, content you.  
 I follow him to serve my turn upon him.  
 We cannot all be masters, nor all masters  
 Cannot be truly followed. You shall mark 45  
 Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,  
 That doting on his own obsequious bondage,  
 Wears out his time much like his master's ass  
 For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashiered.  
 Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are  
 Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty, 50

33 God] Q1; not in F 33 Moorship's] F; Worships Q1 35] Rowe; Why...remedy / ...service F, Q1 35 Why] F; But Q1 37 Not by the] Q1; And not by F 38] F; Stood...first / ...self Q1 39 affined] F; assign'd Q1 43 all be] F; be all Q1 48 nought] F; noughte Q1 49-52] F; Whip...knaves / ...forms / ...hearts / ...throwing / ...lords Q1

from moving; which is how Iago views himself – unable to advance owing to Cassio's intervention. F's 'be-be-led' is possible; but the metre and Q1's 'be-led' and the use of 'calmed' rather than 'becalmed' make Malone's emendation attractive.

31 debtor and creditor book-keeper. See 20 n. above.

31 counter-caster one who reckons with counters or tokens, a petty accountant.

32 in good time Lit. 'opportunely', but used ironically here.

33 God...mark A phrase of unknown origin, meaning roughly 'God help us!'

33 Moorship's The quibble is with 'Worship's' (Q1's reading). This is the first example of Iago's obsession with Othello's race and colour.

33 ancient ensign (originally the army's standard-bearer).

35 service the military life.

36 Preferment Promotion.

36 letter and affection personal recommendation and favouritism.

37 old gradation Old-fashioned method of steady advancement from rank to rank.

39 term way, manner.

39 affined bound, constrained.

41 content you be pacified.

44 truly loyally, faithfully.

44 shall mark cannot avoid observing.

45 knee-crooking knave bowing servant. Compare *Ham.* 3.2.61-2: 'crook the pregnant hinges of the knee / Where thrift may follow fawning'.

47 time working life.

47-8 much like...cashiered Compare *JC* 4.1.21-30 where Antony describes Lepidus as a man requiring this kind of treatment.

49 me Lit. 'for me'. An ethical dative.

50 trimmed decked out.

50 visages appearances.

Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,  
 And throwing but shows of service on their lords,  
 Do well thrive by them; and when they have lined their coats,  
 Do themselves homage. These fellows have some soul,  
 And such a one do I profess myself. 55

For, sir,

It is as sure as you are Roderigo,  
 Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago;  
 In following him, I follow but myself.  
 Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty, 60  
 But seeming so for my peculiar end.

For when my outward action doth demonstrate  
 The native act and figure of my heart  
 In complement extern, 'tis not long after  
 But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve 65  
 For daws to peck at. I am not what I am.

RODERIGO What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,  
 If he can carry it thus!

IAGO

Call up her father:

Rouse him, make after him, poison his delight,  
 Proclaim him in the street, incense her kinsmen, 70  
 And though he in a fertile climate dwell,  
 Plague him with flies: though that his joy be joy,

53-4] *Rowe*; Do...them / ...coats / ...homage / ...soul F, Q1 54 These] F; Those Q1 56] *Capell*; part of 55 F, Q1 60-1] F; Heaven...I / ...so / ...end Q1 62 doth] F; does Q1 66] F; For...at / ...am Q1 66 daws] F; Doues Q1 67 full] Q1; fall F 67 thick-lips] Q1; Thicks-lips F 70 street] Q1; Streets F

52 throwing bestowing.

52 but shows mere outward appearances.

53 lined their coats gained all they can.

54 Do themselves homage Turn their attentions totally to their own interests.

58 Were I...Iago If I were in Othello's position, I would be able to see through the kind of apparently loyal service a subordinate like me is giving him.

61 peculiar personal, private.

63 native act and figure real action and intention.

64 complement extern outward demonstration.

65 upon my sleeve This is where servants wore the badge indicating the master they served. Iago

dissociates himself from such obvious displays of allegiance, because he is not what he seems to be.

66 daws Jackdaws were proverbially stupid and obsessed with snapping up trifles, which seems to be Iago's point here. Q1's 'doues' has been defended, but Iago would surely be more concerned at his heart's being fathomed by a foolish creature than by a notoriously mild one.

67 full fortune perfect good luck.

67 thick-lips This is the first piece of evidence that Othello is conceived as being Negroid rather than Arab.

67 owe possess.

68 carry get away with, succeed in.

69 him...him...his All refer to Othello.

Yet throw such chances of vexation on't  
As it may lose some colour.

RODERIGO Here is her father's house; I'll call aloud. 75

IAGO Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell,  
As when, by night and negligence, the fire  
Is spied in populous cities.

RODERIGO What ho, Brabantio! Signior Brabantio, ho!

IAGO Awake! What ho, Brabantio! Thieves, thieves! 80

Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!  
Thieves, thieves!

BRABANTIO [*appears*] *above at a window*.

BRABANTIO What is the reason of this terrible summons?  
What is the matter there?

RODERIGO Signior, is all your family within? 85

IAGO Are your doors locked?

BRABANTIO Why, wherefore ask you this?

IAGO Zounds, sir, you're robbed; for shame, put on your gown;

Your heart is burst; you have lost half your soul;

Even now, now, very now, an old black ram

Is tugging your white ewe. Arise, arise; 90

Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,

Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.

Arise, I say!

BRABANTIO What, have you lost your wits?

73 chances] F; changes Q1; charges *conj.* Walker 73 on't] F; out Q1 80] F; Awake...Brabantio / Thieves, thieves, thieves Q1 82 SD] *Bra. Above. F*; Brabantio *at a window*. Q1 83] Q1; What...terrible / Summons F 86 your doors locked] F; all doore lockts Q1 87 Zounds] Q1; *not in F* 89 now, now,] F; now, Q1 92-3 Or...say] F; *one line in Q1*

73 chances Most editors follow Q1 and read 'changes' (i.e. disturbances) which could scarcely fail to affect Othello's joy. Iago is suggesting rather that Roderigo should take steps which will cause 'possibilities of vexation' that *may* affect Othello's present happiness.

74 As it may That may cause it to.

76 like timorous such frightening.

77 by night...fire i.e. a fire caused by negligence at night.

82 SD *window* Most Elizabethan stages appear to have had a balcony or upper acting-area, and some had windows towards the side of a rear balcony over the entry doors. See the reconstruction

of the Blackfriars Playhouse in I. Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse*, 1964, p. 307.

84 the matter your business.

87 Zounds i.e. by Christ's wounds; a strong oath.

87 gown An outdoor gown worn over day clothes; although it is possible that Iago is referring to Brabantio's senatorial robe. There may be a quibble on 'robed/robbed'.

88 burst broken.

90 tugging covering sexually (from a northern dialect form of the noun 'tup' meaning 'ram').

91 snorting snoring.

92 devil i.e. Othello, because he is black.

RODERIGO Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?

BRABANTIO Not I; what are you? 95

RODERIGO My name is Roderigo.

BRABANTIO The worser welcome;  
I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors;  
In honest plainness thou hast heard me say  
My daughter is not for thee. And now in madness,  
Being full of supper and distempering draughts, 100  
Upon malicious bravery dost thou come  
To start my quiet.

RODERIGO Sir, sir, sir –

BRABANTIO But thou must needs be sure  
My spirit and my place have in them power  
To make this bitter to thee.

RODERIGO Patience, good sir. 105

BRABANTIO What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice;  
My house is not a grange.

RODERIGO Most grave Brabantio,  
In simple and pure soul I come to you.

IAGO Zounds, sir; you are one of those that will not serve God if the  
devil bid you. Because we come to do you service and you think 110  
we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary  
horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have  
coursers for cousins, and jennets for germans.

BRABANTIO What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor 115  
are now making the beast with two backs.

96 worser] F; worse Q1 101 bravery] Q1; knauerie F 104 spirit...them] Q1; spirits...their F  
106-7 What...grange] Q1; What...robbing/...grange F 109 Zounds] Q1; not in F 110 and] F; not in Q1  
115 comes] F; come Q1 116 now] Q1; not in F

100 **distempering** exciting, disturbing.

101 **bravery** noisy, showy display. Compare *Ham.* 5.2.79-80: 'the bravery of his grief did put me / Into a towering passion'. F's 'knauery' has been defended, though 'malicious' then becomes superfluous. Brabantio is referring to Roderigo's disturbing his sleep with noisy drunken behaviour, not to the viciousness of the action.

102 **start my quiet** disturb my rest. Metrically this line is completed by the first line of Brabantio's next speech. Roderigo's words are an attempted interruption and thus extrametrical.

104 **spirit and my place** character and my position as senator.

107 **grange** house in the country (hence isolated).

108 **simple and pure** sincere and disinterested.

111-12 **Barbary horse** i.e. the Moorish Othello (with a pun on 'barbarian'). The north coastal regions of Africa were famous for thoroughbred horses.

112 **nephews** close relatives; here 'grandsons'.

112 **neigh** There is probably a pun on 'nay' = deny their title to your blood and culture.

113 **jennets** small Spanish horses.

113 **germans** close kinsmen.

114 **profane** foul-mouthed.

116 **making...backs** copulating. We learn, however, from 2.3.10 that the marriage is not consummated in Venice.

BRABANTIO Thou art a villain.

IAGO You are a senator.

BRABANTIO This thou shalt answer; I know thee, Roderigo.

RODERIGO Sir, I will answer anything. But I beseech you  
 If't be your pleasure and most wise consent 120  
 (As partly I find it is) that your fair daughter,  
 At this odd-even and dull watch o'the night,  
 Transported with no worse nor better guard,  
 But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,  
 To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor: 125  
 If this be known to you, and your allowance,  
 We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs.  
 But if you know not this, my manners tell me,  
 We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe  
 That from the sense of all civility 130  
 I thus would play and trifle with your reverence.  
 Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,  
 I say again, hath made a gross revolt,  
 Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes  
 In an extravagant and wheeling stranger 135  
 Of here and everywhere. Straight satisfy yourself.  
 If she be in her chamber or your house,  
 Let loose on me the justice of the state  
 For thus deluding you.

BRABANTIO Strike on the tinder, ho!  
 Give me a taper; call up all my people. 140  
 This accident is not unlike my dream;

120-36 If't...yourself.] F; not in Q1 122 odd-even] Malone; odde Euen F 139 thus deluding you] F; this delusion Q1

117 You are a senator There are two ways of delivering this line: (1) with Iago suppressing some uncomplimentary name on the tip of his tongue and substituting 'senator'; (2) with ironical politeness, thus casting doubt on the dignity of Brabantio's position.

118 thou Specifically addressed to Roderigo.  
 118 answer be called to account for.  
 119 answer give a satisfactory reply to any charge.

120 wise knowing, fully informed.  
 121 partly I find I am half-convinced (in view of your reception of my news).

122 odd-even just after midnight. Compare *Mac.* 3.4.125-6: 'What is the night? / Almost at odds with morning, which is which.'

124 knave servant.

124 gondolier Pronounced 'gondolier'.

126 your allowance something approved of by you.

127 saucy insolent.

128 manners knowledge of correct social behaviour.

130 from...civility contrary to every feeling of good conduct.

131 your reverence the respect due to you.

134 wit intelligence.

135 extravagant and wheeling extremely vagrant and wide-ranging.

136 Straight satisfy Immediately ascertain the facts for.

140 taper candle.

141 accident occurrence.

Belief of it oppresses me already.

Light, I say, light!

*Exit*

IAGO

Farewell, for I must leave you.

It seems not meet nor wholesome to my place

To be produced, as if I stay I shall,

145

Against the Moor. For I do know the state,

However this may gall him with some check,

Cannot with safety cast him; for he's embarked

With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,

Which even now stands in act, that, for their souls,

150

Another of his fathom they have none

To lead their business; in which regard,

Though I do hate him as I do hell's pains,

Yet, for necessity of present life,

I must show out a flag and sign of love,

155

Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely find him,

Lead to the Sagittary the raised search,

And there will I be with him. So farewell.

*Exit*

*Enter Brabantio in his nightgown, and SERVANTS with torches.*

BRABANTIO It is too true an evil. Gone she is,

And what's to come of my despisèd time

160

Is nought but bitterness. Now Roderigo,

Where didst thou see her? O unhappy girl!

With the Moor, say'st thou? Who would be a father?

How didst thou know 'twas she? O she deceives me

143 SD] F; not in Q1 144 place] F; pate Q1 145 produced] Q1; producted F 147 However] How euer F, Q1; Now euer Q1 (some copies) 151 none] F; not Q1 153 hell's pains] Q1; hell apines F; hell-pains *Dyce* 156-7] F; Which...surely / ...search Q1 157 Sagittary] F; Sagittar Q1 158 SD] Q1; *Enter Brabantio, with Seruants and Torchcs.* F 164 she deceives] F; thou deceiuest Q1

144 meet fitting.

144 place position (as Othello's ensign).

145 produced i.e. as a witness.

147 gall...check irritate him with some reprimand; lit. 'slightly hurt a horse by pulling back the rein'.

148 cast discharge.

148-9 embarked...to about to be engaged in.

149 loud reason shouted agreement (by the Senate).

150 stands in act 'are in progress', or perhaps 'are about to break out'.

150 for their souls to save themselves.

151 fathom capability.

154 life livelihood.

155 flag Perhaps a quibble on his post as ensign.

157 Sagittary The name of a house or inn where Othello and Desdemona have taken lodgings, so called because of its sign of Sagittarius or Centaur. It is not the Venetian armoury as some editors have suggested.

158 SD *nightgown* dressing-gown.

160 despisèd time Either 'the rest of my life, which is now odious to me', or 'the remainder of my existence, in which people will look with scorn on me'.

164 she deceives Q1's 'thou deceiuest' may be defended as being a direct address to the absent Desdemona or it may be the result of the compositor or copyist carrying on the 'thou' in lines 162, 163, 164.

Past thought! What said she to you? Get more tapers, 165  
 Raise all my kindred. Are they married, think you?

RODERIGO Truly I think they are.

BRABANTIO O heaven! How got she out? O treason of the blood!  
 Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds  
 By what you see them act. Is there not charms 170  
 By which the property of youth and maidhood  
 May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo,  
 Of some such thing?

RODERIGO Yes, sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO Call up my brother. O that you had had her!  
 Some one way, some another. Do you know 175  
 Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

RODERIGO I think I can discover him, if you please  
 To get good guard and go along with me.

BRABANTIO Pray you lead on. At every house I'll call;  
 I may command at most. Get weapons, ho! 180  
 And raise some special officers of night:  
 On, good Roderigo; I'll deserve your pains.

*Exeunt*

## 1.2 Enter OTHELLO, IAGO and ATTENDANTS with torches.

IAGO Though in the trade of war I have slain men,  
 Yet do I hold it very stuff o'the conscience  
 To do no contrived murder. I lack iniquity

168] Q1; Oh...out / ... blood F 171 maidhood] F; manhood Q1 173 Yes...indeed] F; I haue sir Q1 174 that] Q1; would F 179 you lead] F; lead me Q1 181 night] Q1; might F Act 1, Scene 2 1.2] *Scena Secunda*. F; not in Q1 2 stuff] F; stuft Q1 2 o' the] o' th' F; of Q1

170 charms spells (or perhaps love philtres).

171 property nature.

171 maidhood Q1's 'manhood' has been defended as meaning 'humanity'; but F's reading has the required implication of impressionable immaturity.

177 discover him reveal where he is.

180 command at demand help from.

181 night This reading from Q1 is supported by reference to a long description of the Venetian 'officers of night' found in Lewes Lewkenor's translation (1599) of Contarino's *De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum*. F's 'might' has been half-heartedly defended on the grounds that, if officers of the night were the normal watch, there

would have been no need for Brabantio to call them 'special'. See p. 10 above.

182 deserve your pains recompense you for your trouble.

### Act 1, Scene 2

1-5 Finding Othello at the Sagittary, Iago has been giving him his own untrue version of his conversation with Roderigo, as well as a true account of Brabantio's fury.

1 trade actual business.

2 very stuff essential material (carrying on the metaphor implicit in 'trade').

3 contrived premeditated, planned, cold-blooded.



Sometimes to do me service. Nine or ten times  
I had thought to have yerked him here, under the ribs.

5

OTHELLO 'Tis better as it is.

IAGO

Nay, but he prated,

And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms  
Against your honour,

That, with the little godliness I have,  
I did full hard forbear him. But I pray, sir,

10

Are you fast married? For be sure of this,

That the magnifico is much beloved,

And hath in his effect a voice potential

As double as the duke's. He will divorce you,

Or put upon you what restraint and grievance

15

The law, with all his might to enforce it on,

Will give him cable.

OTHELLO

Let him do his spite;

My services which I have done the signiory

Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know –

Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,

20

I shall provulgate – I fetch my life and being

From men of royal siege, and my demerits

May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune

4 Sometimes] Q1; Sometime F 5] F; I...here / ...ribs Q1 8-9] Pope; one line in F, Q1 10 pray, sir,] pray sir, Q1; pray you Sir, F 11 For be sure] Q1; Be assur'd F 15 and] Q1; or F 16 The] F; That Q1 17 Will] F; Weele Q1 20 Which...know] F; not in Q1 21 provulgate] Q1; promulgate F 22 siege] F; height Q1

5 yerked jabbed (here, with a sword or dagger).

5 him i.e. Roderigo.

7 scurvy insulting.

10 full...him restrained myself with great difficulty from attacking him.

11 fast firmly.

12 magnifico i.e. Brabantio. The chief noblemen of Venice were called *Magnifici*.

13 in his effect...potential at his command a powerful influence.

14 As double...duke's This suggests that Shakespeare believed that the duke had two votes to the senator's one, a misapprehension that William Thomas in *The History of Italy* (1549) claimed was common in England. Yet there are several accurate accounts of Venetian voting procedures in Lewkenor's translation (1599) of Contarino's *De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum*. The lines need not be specific, and may mean simply that Brabantio's opinion carried in effect the same weight as the duke's.

15 grievance injury, punishment.

16 enforce it on cause it to be applied with the utmost rigour.

17 cable scope (a nautical term).

17 spite utmost harm to me.

18 signiory oligarchy of Venice.

19 out-tongue outweigh; lit. 'cry louder than'.

19 to know unknown.

21 provulgate make known. F's 'promulgate' is possible, but it usually carried the idea of official publication.

22 siege literally 'seat of authority', but here 'rank' as in *Ham.* 4.7.76. Q1's 'height' is possible, meaning 'high rank' as in *R2* 1.2.189.

22 demerits worth, merits, as in *Cor.* 1.1.272.

23 unbonneted with all due respect (having removed their hats), without impertinence. Nearly all modern editors take the meaning to be 'without taking off their hats', supporting this interpretation by reference to *Cor.* 2.2.27, 'bonneted', which is too ambiguous in its context to be of any help. The

As this that I have reached. For know, Iago,  
 But that I love the gentle Desdemona, 25  
 I would not my unhoused free condition  
 Put into circumscription and confine  
 For the sea's worth. But look what lights come yond!

IAGO Those are the raised father and his friends;  
 You were best go in.

OTHELLO Not I; I must be found. 30  
 My parts, my title, and my perfect soul  
 Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

IAGO By Janus, I think no.

*Enter CASSIO, with OFFICERS and torches.*

OTHELLO The servants of the duke and my lieutenant!  
 The goodness of the night upon you, friends. 35  
 What is the news?

CASSIO The duke does greet you, general,  
 And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance  
 Even on the instant.

OTHELLO What is the matter, think you?

CASSIO Something from Cyprus, as I may divine.  
 It is a business of some heat. The galleys 40  
 Have sent a dozen sequent messengers  
 This very night at one another's heels;  
 And many of the consuls, raised and met,  
 Are at the duke's already. You have been hotly called for,  
 When, being not at your lodging to be found, 45

28] F; For...worth / ...yonder Q1 28 yond] F; yonder Q1 29 Those] F; These Q1 32 Is it] F; it is Q1  
 33 SD] *Enter Cassio, with Torches.* F (after 28); *Enter Cassio with lights, Officers, and torches.* Q1 (after worth in 28)  
 34] Q1; The...dukes / ...lieutenant F 34 duke] Q1; Dukes F 35 you] F; your Q1 41 sequent] F; frequent Q1

tenor of Othello's lines is that he is fully aware of the way his marriage will be viewed by the Venetians, but his birth and achievements in fact enable him to claim to be the equal of Desdemona without infringing the standards of modest and polite behaviour. See 1.1.10 n.

23 proud a fortune elevated a success.

25 gentle retiring, soft-natured; with a pun on 'of noble birth'.

26 unhoused unconfined (by marriage). Contrast the mischievous version at 1.1.135-6.

27 confine restriction.

28 sea's worth i.e. treasures lying on the sea bed. Compare *H5* 1.2.163-5: 'rich...as is the...bottom of the sea / With sunken wrack and

sumless treasuries'; and Clarence's dream in *R3* 1.4.24-33.

29 raised who has been got out of bed; with a pun on 'angered'.

31 parts natural gifts, character.

31 title legal right, position as a husband.

31 perfect soul fully prepared conscience. Compare *MM* 5.1.180-2, 'when you have / A business for yourself, pray heaven you then / Be perfect'.

33 Janus The Roman two-faced god of beginnings; ironically appropriate for Iago to swear by.

38 matter business.

39 divine guess.

40 heat urgency.

The senate hath sent about three several quests  
To search you out.

OTHELLO 'Tis well I am found by you.  
I will but spend a word here in the house,  
And go with you.

[Exit]

CASSIO Ancient, what makes he here?

IAGO Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land carrack;  
If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.

50

CASSIO I do not understand.

IAGO He's married.

CASSIO To who?

[Enter Othello.]

IAGO Marry, to – Come, captain, will you go?

OTHELLO Have with you.

CASSIO Here comes another troop to seek for you.

*Enter BRABANTIO, RODERIGO and OFFICERS with lights and weapons.*

IAGO It is Brabantio; general, be advised,  
He comes to bad intent.

55

OTHELLO Holla, stand there!

RODERIGO Signior, it is the Moor.

BRABANTIO Down with him, thief!

IAGO You, Roderigo? Come, sir, I am for you.

OTHELLO Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.  
Good signior, you shall more command with years  
Than with your weapons.

60

46 hath] F; not in Q1 46 about] F; about Q1 48–9 I...you] F; one line in Q1 48 but] F; not in Q1 49 SD] Rowe; not in F, Q1 52 SD] Rowe; not in F, Q1 53 Have with you] F; Ha, with who? Q1 54 SD] Enter Brabantio, Roderigo, with Officers, and Torches. F; Enters Brabantio, Roderigo, and others with lights and weapons. Q1 59–61] Q1; as prose in F

46 about all over the city.

46 several quests separate search parties.

49 makes he is he doing.

50 carrack A large treasure ship, such as those that carried the wealth of America to Spain. In using this metaphor Iago is debasing Othello's marriage by viewing it as an act of high-seas piracy. 'Boarded' has a sexual connotation.

52 I do not understand As Cassio knew of Othello's wooing (see 3.3.93–5), actors such as Edwin Booth claimed that this line should be played

with a great deal of feigned surprise; but see pp. 16–17 above.

53 Marry By the Virgin Mary; a mild oath.

53 Have I'll go.

58 Iago takes immediate steps to protect himself and his 'purse' should a brawl develop, by singling out Roderigo as his opponent.

59 dew i.e. rather than blood. Othello's scorn is that of the professional fighter towards civilian brawlers.

BRABANTIO O thou foul thief! Where hast thou stowed my daughter?

Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her,  
 For I'll refer me to all things of sense,  
 If she in chains of magic were not bound, 65  
 Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,  
 So opposite to marriage that she shunned  
 The wealthy curlèd darlings of our nation,  
 Would ever have, t'incur a general mock,  
 Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom 70  
 Of such a thing as thou – to fear, not to delight.  
 Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense  
 That thou hast practised on her with foul charms,  
 Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals  
 That weakens motion. I'll have't disputed on; 75  
 'Tis probable and palpable to thinking.  
 I therefore apprehend and do attach thee  
 For an abuser of the world, a practiser  
 Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.  
 Lay hold upon him. If he do resist, 80  
 Subdue him at his peril.

OTHELLO Hold your hands,  
 Both you of my inclining and the rest.  
 Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it  
 Without a prompter. Where will you that I go  
 To answer this your charge?

BRABANTIO To prison, till fit time 85  
 Of law and course of direct session  
 Call thee to answer.

OTHELLO What if I do obey?

62] Q1; O...thief / ...daughter F 64 things] F; thing Q1 65] F; not in Q1 68 darlings] Q1; Deareling F  
 72-7] F; not in Q1 78 For] F; Such Q1 84 Where] Q1; Whether F 85 To] F; And Q1 87 I] Q1; not in F

62 stowed hidden away, lodged.  
 63 enchanted cast a spell on. See I.1.170-3.  
 64 refer me to have recourse to as authority; as  
 in *WT* 3.2.115.  
 64 all things of sense all reasonable creatures.  
 69 general mock public ridicule.  
 70 her guardage her father's guardianship.  
 71 fear be frightened.  
 72 gross in sense palpably obvious; as in *AWW*  
 I.3.172.  
 74 minerals poisonous mineral drugs.

75 weakens motion dulls the normal perceptive  
 faculties.  
 75 disputed on contested, debated (by experts).  
 77 attach arrest.  
 78 abuser of the world corrupter of society.  
 79 arts inhibited... warrant magical practices  
 which are prohibited and illegal.  
 82 of my inclining on my side. Compare *Ant.*  
 4.6.12-13: 'did dissuade / Great Herod to incline  
 himself to Caesar'.  
 86 course of direct session specially convened  
 sitting of a court of justice.

How may the duke be therewith satisfied,  
Whose messengers are here about my side  
Upon some present business of the state 90  
To bring me to him?

OFFICER 'Tis true, most worthy signior;  
The duke's in council, and your noble self  
I am sure is sent for.

BRABANTIO How? The duke in council?  
In this time of the night? Bring him away;  
Mine's not an idle cause. The duke himself, 95  
Or any of my brothers of the state,  
Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own;  
For if such actions may have passage free,  
Bondslaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.

*Exeunt*

1.3 *Enter DUKE and SENATORS, set at a table with lights, and ATTENDANTS.*

DUKE There is no composition in these news  
That gives them credit.

1 SENATOR Indeed they are disproportioned.  
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.

DUKE And mine, a hundred and forty.

2 SENATOR And mine, two hundred;  
But though they jump not on a just accompt – 5  
As in these cases where the aim reports  
'Tis oft with difference – yet do they all confirm  
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus.

DUKE Nay, it is possible enough to judgement:  
I do not so secure me in the error, 10

91 bring] F; beare Q1 Act 1, Scene 3 1.3] *Scæna Tertia.* F; not in Q1 0 SD] Q1; *Enter Duke, Senators, and Officers.* F  
1 these] Q1; this F 4 and] Q1; not in F 6 the aim] F; they aym'd Q1 10 in] F; to Q1

90 present immediate.

95 idle cause trifling, unimportant legal case.

96 brothers of the state fellow senators.

98 have passage free go unchecked.

2 disproportioned inconsistent.

5 jump agree, coincide. Compare *Shr.* 1.1.190:  
'Both our inventions meet and jump in one.'

5 just accompt exact numbering.

6 aim estimate.

9 to judgement when carefully considered.

10 secure me in the error feel safe because of  
the inconsistency.

Act 1, Scene 3

1 composition consistency, agreement.

2 credit credibility.



OFFICER Here is more news.

*Enter a MESSENGER.*

MESSENGER The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,  
Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes  
Have there injoined with an after fleet.

35

I SENATOR Ay, so I thought. How many, as you guess?

MESSENGER Of thirty sail, and now they do restem  
Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance  
Their purposes toward Cyprus. Signior Montano,  
Your trusty and most valiant servitor,  
With his free duty recommends you thus,  
And prays you to believe him.

40

DUKE 'Tis certain then for Cyprus.

Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?

I SENATOR He's now in Florence.

DUKE Write from us to him  
Post-post-haste dispatch.

45

I SENATOR Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

*Enter BRABANTIO, OTHELLO, CASSIO, IAGO, RODERIGO and  
OFFICERS.*

DUKE Valiant Othello we must straight employ you  
Against the general enemy Ottoman.

[*To Brabantio*] I did not see you: welcome, gentle  
signior;

50

We lacked your counsel and your help tonight.

32 SD a MESSENGER] F; a 2. Messenger Q1 35 injoined] Q1; inioynted them F 36] F; not in Q1 37 SHMESSENGER] F; not in Q1 37 restem] F; resterine Q1 42 believe] F, Q1; relieve conj. Capell 44 he] F; here Q1 45-6 Write...dispatch] Pope; Write...us / ...dispatch F; one line in Q1 45-6 us...haste] vs, / To him, Post, Post-haste, F; vs, wish him post, post hast Q1 47 SD CASSIO, IAGO, RODERIGO] F; Roderigo, Iago, Cassio, Desdemona Q1 (after 46) 50 SD] Theobald; not in F, Q1 51 lacked] F; lacke Q1

35 injoined...after united with a following.

37-8 restem...course steer back to their original course.

38-9 bearing...toward making openly for.

41 free duty recommends willing service informs.

42 believe The emendation 'relieve' has been popular since the eighteenth century; but Montano seems rather to be giving information of guaranteed authority in the formal language of state, as the Duke's response at 43-4 suggests.

44 Luccicos There has been a good deal of speculation about this name and the function of its

introduction here. Some editors take it as a corrupt form of 'Luccicus' or 'Lucchese' (an Italian, Marco Lucchese, being resident in London as master of an ordinary in the early seventeenth century), and suggest that a knowledgeable Cypriot resident in Italy is intended. It is surely a theatrical device for indicating the urgent action forced on the duke by the news and to emphasize the singular importance of Othello.

48 straight immediately.

49 general universal (because anti-Christian).

50 gentle noble.

BRABANTIO So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me:  
 Neither my place nor aught I heard of business  
 Hath raised me from my bed, nor doth the general care  
 Take hold on me; for my particular grief 55  
 Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature  
 That it engluts and swallows other sorrows  
 And yet is still itself.

DUKE Why, what's the matter?

BRABANTIO My daughter! O, my daughter!

SENATORS Dead?

BRABANTIO Ay, to me.

She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted 60  
 By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;  
 For nature so preposterously to err,  
 Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,  
 Sans witchcraft could not.

DUKE Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding 65  
 Hath thus beguiled your daughter of herself,  
 And you of her, the bloody book of law  
 You shall yourself read in the bitter letter  
 After your own sense, yea, though our proper son  
 Stood in your action.

BRABANTIO Humbly I thank your grace. 70  
 Here is the man: this Moor, whom now it seems  
 Your special mandate for the state affairs  
 Hath hither brought.

ALL We are very sorry for't.

DUKE [*To Othello*] What in your own part can you say to this?

55 Take] F; Take any Q1 55 on] F; of Q1 55 grief] F; grieves Q1 58 yet] Rowe; it F, Q1 59 SH SENATORS] Sen. F; All. Q1 63] F; not in Q1 64 Sans] F; Since Q1; Saunce Q1 (*some copies*) 69 your] F; its Q1 69 yea] F; not in Q1 74 SD] Theobald; not in F, Q1

53 place public office.

55-7 for my...sorrows Proverbial: 'The greater grief drives out the less' (Tilley G446).

55 particular personal.

56 flood-gate A sluice-gate which holds back water; but here used to mean the torrent of water so held back. Compare *1H4* 2.4.394: 'For tears do stop the flood-gates of her eyes.'

56 o'erbearing overwhelming.

57 engluts devours, gulps down.

60 abused wronged, harmed.

61 mountebanks charlatans.

63 deficient naturally defective, simple-minded.

63 lame of sense of faulty sensory perception.

64 Sans Without (French, Latin).

66 beguiled...herself cunningly robbed your daughter of her normal natural reactions.

67 bloody death-dealing. Witchcraft was a capital crime.

68-9 You...sense Compare Tilley LIII: 'To have the law in one's own hand'.

69 After...sense According to your own interpretation; i.e. presumably *au pied de la lettre*. Some editors favour Q1's 'its' over F's 'yours', citing Venice's pride in its impartial justice.

69 our proper my own.

70 Stood...action Faced your charge.

71 For a possible staging of this scene, see illustration 4, p. 19 above.



BRABANTIO Nothing, but this is so.

75

OTHELLO Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,

My very noble and approved good masters,

That I have tane away this old man's daughter,

It is most true; true I have married her;

The very head and front of my offending

80

Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in my speech

And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace,

For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith

Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used

Their dearest action in the tented field;

85

And little of this great world can I speak

More than pertains to feats of broil and battle;

And therefore little shall I grace my cause

In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver

90

Of my whole course of love: what drugs, what charms,

What conjuration and what mighty magic –

For such proceedings I am charged withal –

I won his daughter.

BRABANTIO

A maiden never bold;

Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion

95

Blushed at herself; and she, in spite of nature,

Of years, of country, credit, everything,

To fall in love with what she feared to look on?

It is a judgement maimed and most imperfect

That will confess perfection so could err

100

Against all rules of nature, and must be driven

To find out practices of cunning hell

82 soft] F; set Q1 87 feats] F; feate Q1 87 broil] Q1; Broiles F 91] Q1; Of...love / ...charms F 93 proceedings I am] proceeding I am F; proceedings am I Q1 94-5 A...bold / Of...] F; A...spirit / ...motion Q1 94-5 bold; Of spirit] bold; Of Spirit F; bold of spirit, Q1 99 maimed] Q1; main'd F 100 could] F; would Q1

77 approved esteemed.

80 head and front whole extent; lit. 'height and breadth'.

81 Rude Unrefined, unpractised.

82 soft Many editors prefer Q1's 'set', taking Othello to refer to his lack of oratorical 'good set terms' (*AYLI* 2.7.17). But the point Othello is making here is that his 'rude' idiom is appropriate to a military existence, as opposed to the 'soft' language required by civilian life.

83 pith strength. Compare *H5* 3.Chor.20-1: 'grandsires, babies, and old women, / Either past or not arriv'd to pith and puissance'.

84 moons wasted months ago.

85 dearest most important.

90 round plain, blunt.

92 conjuration magical incantation.

93 withal with.

95-6 her motion... herself she was embarrassed by her own natural impulses.

97 years i.e. the difference in age between Desdemona and Othello. Compare 3.3.267-8.

97 credit reputation.

102 practices evil machinations.

Why this should be. I therefore vouch again  
 That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood  
 Or with some dram conjured to this effect 105  
 He wrought upon her.

DUKE To vouch this is no proof  
 Without more wider and more overt test  
 Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods  
 Of modern seeming do prefer against him.

I SENATOR But, Othello, speak: 110  
 Did you by indirect and forcèd courses  
 Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?  
 Or came it by request and such fair question  
 As soul to soul affordeth?

OTHELLO I do beseech you 115  
 Send for the lady to the Sagittary  
 And let her speak of me before her father.  
 If you do find me foul in her report,  
 The trust, the office I do hold of you,  
 Not only take away, but let your sentence  
 Even fall upon my life.

DUKE Fetch Desdemona hither. 120

OTHELLO Ancient, conduct them: you best know the place.

[Exit Iago with two or three Attendants]

And till she come, as truly as to heaven  
 I do confess the vices of my blood,  
 So justly to your grave ears I'll present  
 How I did thrive in this fair lady's love, 125  
 And she in mine.

DUKE Say it, Othello.

106 SH DUKE] Q1; not in F 106 vouch] F; youth Q1 107 wider] F; certaine Q1 107 overt] Q1; ouer F 108 Than these] F; These are Q1 109 seeming do] F; seemings, you Q1 110 SH I SENATOR] Q1; Sen. F 115 Sagittary] F; Sagittar Q1 118] F; not in Q1 121] Q1; Ancient...them / ...place F 121 SD] Capell subst.; not in F; Exit two or three. Q1 (after 120) 122 till] Q1; tell F 122 truly] F; faithfull Q1 123] F; not in Q1

104 blood sexual passion.

105 dram dose.

105 conjured to this effect magically created for this purpose.

106 To vouch...proof Proverbial: 'Accusation is no proof' (Tilley S1019).

107 wider fuller.

107 test testimony, evidence.

108 thin habits insubstantial outward appearances.

108 poor likelihoods weak inferences, tenuous indications.

109 modern seeming commonplace assumptions. Compare *AYLI* 2.7.156: 'wise saws and modern instances'.

111 indirect underhand.

111 forcèd courses means used against the will of the victim.

113 question conversation.

117 foul guilty.

123 blood nature.

124 justly truthfully, exactly.

OTHELLO Her father loved me, oft invited me,  
 Still questioned me the story of my life  
 From year to year – the battles, sieges, fortunes  
 That I have passed. 130  
 I ran it through, even from my boyish days  
 To the very moment that he bade me tell it;  
 Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,  
 Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
 Of hair-breadth scapes i'th'imminent deadly breach, 135  
 Of being taken by the insolent foe  
 And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence,  
 And with it all my travels' history:  
 Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
 Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch  
 heaven, 140  
 It was my hint to speak – such was the process:  
 And of the cannibals that each other eat,  
 The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
 Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear  
 Would Desdemona seriously incline; 145  
 But still the house affairs would draw her thence,  
 Which ever as she could with haste dispatch  
 She'd come again, and with a greedy ear  
 Devour up my discourse; which I observing  
 Took once a pliant hour and found good means 150  
 To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
 That I would all my pilgrimage dilate

129 battles] Q1; Battaile F 129 fortunes] Q1; Fortune F 133 spake] Q1; spoke F 134 by] F; of Q1 138 with  
 it all] Q1; portance in F 138 travels'] Q1; Trauellours F 139 antres] *Theobald*; Antrees Q1; Antars F 140 and]  
 Q1; not in F 140 heads] Q1; head F 141 the] Q1; my F 142 other] Q1; others F 144 Do grow] Q1; Grew F  
 144 This] Q1; These things F 146 thence] Q1; hence F 147 Which] F; And Q1

128 Still Continually.

134 moving accidents stirring adventures.

135 scapes escapes.

138 with it all F's 'portance in' (= conduct during) is rather out of keeping with the modesty Othello is trying to project in this self-defence.

139 antres caves (Latin *antra*).

139 idle desolate, empty. Compare *R2* 3.4.66: 'idle hours'.

140 Rough quarries Rugged precipices, jagged mountain sides.

141 hint opportunity, cue.

143 Anthropophagi Cannibals. Anthropophagi and headless men (blemmyae) were mentioned by

Pliny (7.2). Accounts of them were also to be found in Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* (1499), which was still being read in the seventeenth century, and his 'wonders' were often represented pictorially in contemporary maps. Sir Walter Raleigh reports their existence in *The Discovery of Guiana* (1595), as does Laurence Keymis in *A Relation of the Second Voyage to Guiana* (1596). Compare *Temp.* 3.3.46-7: 'there were such men / Whose heads stood in their breasts'.

150 pliant suitable, opportune.

152 dilate tell in full. Compare *Err.* 1.1.122-3: 'Do me the favour to dilate at full / What have befall'n.'

Whereof by parcels she had something heard,  
 But not intently. I did consent,  
 And often did beguile her of her tears 155  
 When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
 That my youth suffered. My story being done,  
 She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:  
 She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,  
 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful; 160  
 She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished  
 That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked me,  
 And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,  
 I should but teach him how to tell my story,  
 And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake: 165  
 She loved me for the dangers I had passed,  
 And I loved her that she did pity them.  
 This only is the witchcraft I have used.  
 Here comes the lady: let her witness it.

*Enter DESDEMONA, Iago and Attendants.*

DUKE I think this tale would win my daughter too. 170  
 Good Brabantio, take up this mangled matter at the best:  
 Men do their broken weapons rather use  
 Than their bare hands.

BRABANTIO I pray you hear her speak.  
 If she confess that she was half the wooer,  
 Destruction on my head if my bad blame 175  
 Light on the man! Come hither, gentle mistress;  
 Do you perceive in all this noble company  
 Where most you owe obedience?

DESDEMONA My noble father,  
 I do perceive here a divided duty:  
 To you I am bound for life and education; 180

153 parcels] F; parcell Q1 154 intently] Q1; instinctively F 156 distressful] F; distressed Q1 158 sighs] Q1;  
 kisses F 159 in] F; I Q1 165 hint] F; heate Q1 169] F; Here...lady / ...it Q1 169 SD Attendants] F; the rest  
 Q1 175 On my head] F; lite on me Q1

153 by parcels piecemeal.

154 intently with continuous attention.

155 beguile her of steal from her, coax from her. Compare *Tro.* 4.4.33-6: 'where injury of chance...rudely beguiles our lips / Of all rejoindure'; and *Wiv.* 4.5.36-8: 'the very same man that beguil'd Master Slender of his chain cozen'd him

of it'. Contrast the Duke's use of the same word at 66 above.

159 passing exceedingly.

162 had made her i.e. she had been born.

171 take...best Compare 'Make the best of a bad bargain' (Tilley B326).

180 education upbringing.

My life and education both do learn me  
 How to respect you. You are lord of all my duty;  
 I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband;  
 And so much duty as my mother showed  
 To you, preferring you before her father, 185  
 So much I challenge that I may profess  
 Due to the Moor my lord.

BRABANTIO God bu'y! I have done.  
 Please it your grace, on to the state affairs.  
 I had rather to adopt a child than get it.  
 Come hither, Moor: 190  
 I here do give thee that with all my heart  
 Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart  
 I would keep from thee. For your sake, jewel,  
 I am glad at soul I have no other child,  
 For thy escape would teach me tyranny 195  
 To hang clogs on them. I have done, my lord.

DUKE Let me speak like yourself and lay a sentence  
 Which as a grise or step may help these lovers  
 Into your favour. 200  
 When remedies are past the griefs are ended  
 By seeing the worst which late on hopes depended.  
 To mourn a mischief that is past and gone  
 Is the next way to draw new mischief on.  
 What cannot be preserved when fortune takes,  
 Patience her injury a mockery makes. 205  
 The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief;

182 lord of all my] Q1; the Lord of F 187 bu'y] Q1; be with you F 192] F; not in Q1 197] Q1; Let...self / ...  
 sentence F 199] Q1; not in F 203 new] F; more Q1

- 181 learn teach.  
 182 all my duty all the respect that is due to you  
 as my father.  
 186 challenge claim.  
 187 bu'y be with you.  
 188 on to let us proceed with.  
 189 get beget.  
 191 with all my heart in which my whole heart  
 was wrapped up.  
 193 For your sake On your account.  
 195 escape elopement.  
 196 clogs shackles. Lit. blocks of wood tied to  
 the legs of animals to prevent their straying.  
 197 like yourself on your behalf and as you  
 would speak (if you were not in your present frame  
 of mind).  
 197 lay a sentence apply a maxim (Latin  
*sententia*).  
 198 grise step. Compare *Tim.* 4.3.16–17: 'for  
 every grize of fortune / Is smooth'd by that below'.  
 200 Proverbial: 'Never grieve for that you  
 cannot help' (Tilley G453).  
 200 remedies hopes of cure.  
 201 which i.e. the griefs, worst expectations.  
 201 late on hopes depended were bolstered  
 until recently by hopeful expectations.  
 202 mischief misfortune.  
 203 next nearest, quickest.  
 204–5 What...makes i.e. patient endurance  
 enables one to take inevitable losses as trifles;  
 compare 'A good heart conquers ill fortune' (Tilley  
 H305).

He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.

BRABANTIO So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile,  
 We lose it not so long as we can smile;  
 He bears the sentence well that nothing bears 210  
 But the free comfort which from thence he hears;  
 But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow  
 That to pay grief must of poor patience borrow.  
 These sentences, to sugar or to gall,  
 Being strong on both sides, are equivocal. 215  
 But words are words; I never yet did hear  
 That the bruised heart was piercèd through the ear.  
 Beseech you now, to the affairs of the state.

DUKE The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus.  
 Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to you; and 220  
 though we have there a substitute of most allowed sufficiency,  
 yet opinion, a more sovereign mistress of effects, throws a  
 more safer voice on you. You must therefore be content to  
 slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn  
 and boisterous expedition. 225

OTHELLO The tyrant custom, most grave senators,  
 Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war  
 My thrice-driven bed of down. I do agnise

217 piercèd] F, Q1; pieced *Theobald* 217 ear] Q1; eares F 218 Beseech...now,] Q1; I humbly beseech you proceed F  
 218 the state] Q1; state F 219 a] F; not in Q1 222 more] F; not in Q1 226 grave] F; great Q1 227 couch]  
*Pope*; Coach F; Cooch Q1

207 spends a bootless indulges in an unavailing.  
 Compare *JC* 3.1.75: 'Doth not Brutus bootless  
 kneel?'

210-13 He bears...borrow Brabantio's distinction is between the easy comfort of an indif-  
 ferent platitude and the real cost of patience to the  
 man whose deeper interest is violated.

211 free unmixed with sorrow.

213 poor Because patience has nothing to lend.

214 gall bitterness. Compare *Tro.* 2.2.144: 'You  
 have the honey still, but these the gall.'

216-17 I never...ear This idea is given  
 extended expression in *Ado* 5.1.15-32.

217 the bruised...ear the broken heart was  
 reached (or lanced, and so cured) by words.  
 Compare *LLL* 5.2.753: 'Honest plain words best  
 pierce the ear of grief.' John Lyly in *Euphues* (ed.  
 R. W. Bond), I, 212, writes of a grief being ripe  
 enough to lance and so cure. Many editors emend  
 'piercèd' to 'piecèd' (= mended).

220 fortitude strength of the defences.

221 substitute deputy (i.e. Montano).

221 allowed sufficiency acknowledged ability.

222 opinion public opinion.

222 more sovereign...effects more para-  
 mount arbiter of what should be done.

222-3 throws...you judges you are the more  
 reliable.

224 slubber slobber, sully. Compare *1H4*  
 2.4.309-11: 'to tickle our noses with speargrass to  
 make them bleed, and then to beslobber our  
 garments with it'.

224 stubborn harsh, rough.

225 boisterous violent. Compare *John*  
 3.4.135-6: 'A sceptre snatch'd with an unruly  
 hand / Must be as boisterously maintain'd.'

226-8 The tyrant...down Proverbial: 'Cus-  
 tom makes all things easy' (Tilley C933).

227 flinty and steel The allusion is to sleeping  
 on the ground in armour.

228 thrice-driven i.e. of the softest feathers  
 (because they have been winnowed three times).

228 agnise acknowledge, confess to.

A natural and prompt alacrity  
 I find in hardness, and do undertake 230  
 These present wars against the Ottomites.  
 Most humbly, therefore, bending to your state,  
 I crave fit disposition for my wife,  
 Due reference of place and exhibition  
 With such accommodation and besort 235  
 As levels with her breeding.

DUKE If you please,  
 Be't at her father's.

BRABANTIO I'll not have it so.

OTHELLO Nor I.

DESDEMONA Nor I; I would not there reside  
 To put my father in impatient thoughts  
 By being in his eye. Most gracious duke, 240  
 To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear  
 And let me find a charter in your voice  
 T'assist my simpleness.

DUKE What would you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA That I did love the Moor to live with him,  
 My downright violence and storm of fortunes 245  
 May trumpet to the world. My heart's subdued  
 Even to the very quality of my lord.  
 I saw Othello's visage in his mind

230 do] F; would Q1 231 These] *Malone*; This F, Q1 234 reference] F; reuerence Q1 236-7 If...father's.] Q1  
 (one line); Why at her Fathers? F 238 Nor I; I would not] Q1; Nor would I F 241 your prosperous] F; a gracious  
 Q1 243 T'assist] F; And if Q1 243 you, Desdemona?] F; you - speake. Q1 244 did] Q1; not in F 245 storm]  
 F; scorne Q1 247 very quality] F; vtmost pleasure Q1

229 alacrity eagerness.  
 230 hardness hardship.  
 232 state authority.  
 234 Due reference of place Appropriate  
 assigning of a residence.  
 234 exhibition financial support.  
 235 besort appropriate companions or  
 attendants.  
 236 levels with is suitable to.  
 236 breeding social position.  
 241 unfolding disclosure, explanation.  
 241 prosperous favourable.  
 242 charter permission (with perhaps the sense  
 of publicly conceded official support).  
 243 simpleness innocence, lack of  
 sophistication.  
 245 downright violence absolute violation of  
 the norm.

245 storm of fortunes This means either 'my  
 taking my future by storm' or 'the upheaval created  
 for my future life'. Shakespeare may be recalling a  
 phrase in Lewkenor's translation (1599) of Contarino's  
*De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum*.  
 Some editors prefer Q1's 'scorne' and thus see  
 Desdemona proving her love for Othello by  
 asserting what she has sacrificed for him. That these  
 two words could be confused by a compositor in  
 reading the handwriting of the period is suggested  
 by the crux in *Tro.* 1.1.37: 'as when the sun doth  
 light a scorn/storm'.

247 quality nature.

248-50 I saw...consecrate This seems to echo  
 Cinthio's introduction to the source story: 'he who  
 wishes to form a true judgement of beauty must  
 admire not only the body, but rather the minds and  
 habits of those who present themselves to his view'  
 (Bullough, VII, 240).

And to his honours and his valiant parts  
 Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate. 250  
 So that, dear lords, if I be left behind  
 A moth of peace, and he go to the war,  
 The rites for which I love him are bereft me,  
 And I a heavy interim shall support  
 By his dear absence. Let me go with him. 255

OTHELLO Let her have your voice.

Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not  
 To please the palate of my appetite,  
 Nor to comply with heat the young affects 260  
 In my distinct and proper satisfaction,  
 But to be free and bounteous to her mind.  
 And heaven defend your good souls that you think  
 I will your serious and great business scant  
 For she is with me. No, when light-winged toys  
 Of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness 265  
 My speculative and officed instruments,  
 That my disports corrupt and taint my business,  
 Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,  
 And all indign and base adversities

253 which] Q1; why F 256–7 Let... heaven, I] F; Your voyces Lords: beseech you let her will, / Haue a free way. I Q1 259 the] F, Q1; and conj. Steevens; of the Keightley 260 my] F, Q1; me Upton 260 distinct] Theobald; defunct F, Q1; disjunct Malone Var.; defect Upton; defenc't Tollet; default conj. Jourdain 261 to her] F; of her Q1 263 great] F; good Q1 264 For] Q1; When F 265 Of] F; And Q1 265 seel] F; foyles Q1 266 officed] F; actiue Q1 266 instruments] Q1; Instrument F

249 valiant parts military virtues.

250 soul and fortunes whole being and future.

252 moth drone, idler.

253 rites rites of love. Compare *Rom.* 3.2.8–9:

'Lovers can see to do their amorous rites / By their own beauties.' Owing to the vagaries of Jacobean orthography F's and Q1's spelling 'rites' could mean 'rights' also; and some editors have taken the word to mean Desdemona's 'privileges' in sharing Othello's military life and dangers for which she says she loves him at 248–50. Ultimately the choice of reading is determined by one's interpretation of Desdemona's character as (1) a girl so modest that she would not dream of saying in public that she desires Othello sexually, or (2) a girl who is frank and open to the point of simplicity. See pp. 27–8 above.

255 dear A possible quibble: (1) that I can least afford; (2) emotionally affecting.

256 voice consent.

259–60 to comply... satisfaction The general sense here is clear enough: Othello believes that he is too mature to be at the mercy of unbridled sexual desire, and that although he expects physical

satisfaction in marriage, he also values just as highly mental sympathy with his wife. The exact meaning is more difficult to arrive at without some emendation of the text of F and Q1. I follow Theobald in changing 'defunct' to 'distinct' on the grounds that such a misreading is paleographically possible and demands least dislocation of the text. See supplementary note for a full discussion.

259 comply with heat satisfy eagerly.

259 young affects newly felt emotions.

260 distinct individual.

261 free generous.

262 defend forbid.

262 think should think.

265 seel blind (from the practice in falconry of sewing up the eyelids of the young hawk).

266 speculative...instruments powers of perception which are for the purpose of my duty. See supplementary note.

267 disports sexual pleasures.

267 taint impair.

268 skillet small cooking pot.

269 indign unworthy (Latin *indignus*).



Make head against my estimation!

270

DUKE Be it as you shall privately determine,

Either for her stay or going. Th'affair cries haste,

And speed must answer it. You must hence tonight.

DESDEMONA Tonight, my lord?

DUKE

This night.

OTHELLO

With all my heart.

DUKE At nine i'the morning, here we'll meet again.

275

Othello, leave some officer behind

And he shall our commission bring to you

With such things else of quality and respect

As doth import you.

OTHELLO

So please your grace, my ancient:

A man he is of honesty and trust.

280

To his conveyance I assign my wife,

With what else needful your good grace shall think

To be sent after me.

DUKE

Let it be so.

Good night to everyone. [*To Brabantio*] And noble  
signior,

If virtue no delighted beauty lack,

285

Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

I SENATOR Adieu, brave Moor; use Desdemona well.

BRABANTIO Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:

She has deceived her father and may thee.

OTHELLO My life upon her faith!

*Exeunt [Duke, Brabantio, Cassio, Senators and Attendants]*

270 estimation] F; reputation Q1 272 her] F; not in Q1 272 affair cries] F; affaires cry Q1 273 it] F; not in Q1  
273 You...tonight.] Q1; assigned to / Sen. / in F 273 hence] Q1; away F 274 DESDEMONA Tonight, my lord?] Q1;  
not in F 274 DUKE This night.] Q1; not in F 275 nine] F; ten Q1 278 With] Q1; And F 278 and] F; or Q1  
279 import] F; concerne Q1 279 So] F; not in Q1 284 SD] Capell; not in F, Q1 288 if...eyes] F; have a quick  
eye Q1 289 and may] F; may doe Q1 290 SD] Theobald subst.; Exit. F; Exeunt. Q1

270 **Make head** Take up arms, mount an attack.

Compare *1H4* 3.1.63-4: 'Three times hath Henry  
Bullingbrook made head / Against my power.'

270 **estimation** reputation.

272 **cries** calls for.

278 **quality and respect** importance and  
relevance.

279 **import** concern.

280 **honesty** This is the first time Iago is  
associated verbally with this quality which the other  
people in the play believe to be most characteristic  
of him.

281 **conveyance** escorting.

285-6 **If virtue...black** Proverbial: 'He is  
handsome that handsome does' (Tilley D410), and  
see an extended treatment of the same idea in *TN*  
3.4.367-70.

285 **delighted** delightful. Compare *Cym.*  
5.4.101-2: 'to make my gift / The more delay'd,  
delighted'.

289 Proverbial: 'He that once deceives is ever  
suspected' (Tilley D180). See 3.3.208 for Iago's use  
of this.

## Honest Iago

290

My Desdemona must I leave to thee;  
 I prithee, let thy wife attend on her,  
 And bring her after in the best advantage.  
 Come, Desdemona, I have but an hour  
 Of love, of worldly matters and direction  
 To spend with thee. We must obey the time.

295

*Exeunt Othello and Desdemona*

RODERIGO Iago.

IAGO What say'st thou, noble heart?

RODERIGO What will I do, think'st thou?

IAGO Why, go to bed and sleep.

300

RODERIGO I will incontinently drown myself.

IAGO If thou dost, I shall never love thee after. Why, thou silly gentleman?

RODERIGO It is silliness to live, when to live is torment: and then we have a prescription to die, when death is our physician.

305

IAGO O villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years, and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found a man that knew how to love himself. Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.

310

RODERIGO What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond, but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

IAGO Virtue? A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners. So that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed

315

293 her] Q1; them F 295 worldly matters] Q1; worldly matter F 296 SD] *Exit Moore and Desdemona* Q1; *Exit*. F  
 302 If] F; Well, if Q1 302 after] F; after it Q1 304 torment] F; a torment Q1 304-5 we have] Q1; haue we F  
 306 O villainous] F; *not in* Q1 307 betwixt] F; betweene Q1 308 a man] Q1; man F 314 our gardens] F;  
 gardens Q1

293 in the best advantage at the most favourable opportunity.

295 direction instructions.

296 time present pressing necessity.

301 incontinently at once.

305 prescription A quibble: (1) right based on long tradition; compare *3H6* 3.3.93-4: 'a silly time / To make prescription for a kingdom's worth'; (2) a doctor's order.

306 villainous pernicious nonsense.

309 guinea-hen Usually this means 'prostitute', which is how Iago views all women.

311 fond infatuated.

312 virtue nature.

313 A fig A derogatory term, usually accom-

panied by a vulgar gesture of shooting the thumb between the first and second fingers.

315-16 if we will... thyme Nettles and lettuce were considered horticultural opposites, having the complementary qualities of dryness and wetness and so believed to aid the growth of each other. The aromatic herbs, hyssop and thyme, were also believed to have the same qualities; compare John Lyly, *Euphues* (ed. R. W. Bond), 1, 187, 'good Gardeiners who in their curious knottes mixe Hisoppe wyth Time as ayders the one to the growth of the other, the one beeing drye, the other moyste'. Thus some editors' emendation of 'thyme' to 'tine' (= tare, vetch) rather misses the point.

315 set plant.

up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts; whereof I take this, that you call love, to be a sect or scion.

RODERIGO It cannot be.

IAGO It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will. Come, be a man. Drown thyself? Drown cats and blind puppies. I have professed me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness. I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse. Follow thou these wars; defeat thy favour with an usurped beard. I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor – put money in thy purse – nor he his to her. It was a violent commencement, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration – put but money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills – fill thy purse with money. The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts

316 thyme] Time F, Q1; tine *Walker* 319 balance] Q1; braine F; beam *Theobald* 323 our unbitted] Q1; or vnbitted F 324 sect] F, Q1; set *Johnson* 328 have] F; not in Q1 331 thou these] *Rowe*; thou the F; these Q1 332 be] Q1; be long F 333 long] Q1; not in F 333 to] F; vnto Q1 334 his] F; not in Q1 334 commencement] Q1; Commencement in her F

316 supply fill.

316 gender kind.

316–17 distract it with divide it among.

318 corrigible authority corrective power.

319 balance scales. Although this is the usual Shakespearean usage, some editors follow *Theobald* and emend to 'beam', of which they take F's 'braine' to be a misreading.

320 poise counterbalance.

320 blood natural passions.

321 conclusions experiments.

322 motions impulses.

322 stings compelling desires. Compare *MM* 1.4.59: 'wanton stings and motions of the sense'.

323 unbitted unbridled, unrestrained by a curb.

324 sect or scion branch or graft. Some editors, wishing to make the horticultural metaphor completely consistent, follow *Johnson* in emending 'sect' to 'set' (= cutting from a plant).

328–9 thy deserving what is due to thee.

329 perdurable everlasting.

330 stead be of use to. Compare *TGV*

2.1.113–14: 'so it stead you...I will write a thousand times as much'.

330 Put money in thy purse Proverbial saying (*Tilley* M1090), meaning 'provide yourself for success'.

331 defeat...beard disfigure your face with a false beard. Iago may be quibbling here at *Roderigo's* expense: i.e. 'pretend you are a real man'. Compare *TN* 5.1.250: 'my masculine usurp'd attire'.

334–5 It was...sequestration Proverbial: 'Such beginning such end' (*Tilley* B262).

335 answerable sequestration correspondingly violent separation.

336 wills sexual desires.

337 locusts According to *Gerarde's Herbal* (1597), 'The carob groweth in Apulia...and other countries eastward, where the cods are so full of sweet juice that it is used to preserve ginger...This is of some called St. John's bread, and thought to be that which is translated *locusts*.' See *Matt.* 3.4.

shall be to him shortly as acerb as the coloquintida. She must change for youth; when she is sated with his body she will find the error of her choice. Therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst. If sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her – therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself! It is clean out of the way. Seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her.

RODERIGO Wilt thou be fast to my hopes, if I depend on the issue?

IAGO Thou art sure of me. Go make money. I have told thee often, and I retell thee again and again, I hate the Moor. My cause is hearted: thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him. If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered. Traverse! Go, provide thy money. We will have more of this tomorrow. Adieu.

RODERIGO Where shall we meet i'the morning?

IAGO At my lodging.

RODERIGO I'll be with thee betimes.

IAGO Go to; farewell. Do you hear, Roderigo?

RODERIGO What say you?

IAGO No more of drowning, do you hear?

RODERIGO I am changed.

IAGO Go to; farewell. Put money enough in your purse.

RODERIGO I'll sell all my land.

*Exit*

338 acerb as the] Q1; bitter as F 338-9 She...youth] F; not in Q1 340 error] Q1; errors F 340 choice. Therefore] F; choyce; shee must haue change, shee must. Therefore Q1 343 a super-subtle] Q1; super-subtle F 345 of] F; a Q1 346 thyself] F; not in Q1 348 if...issue] F; not in Q1 350 retell] F; tell Q1 351 hath] F; has Q1 351 conjunctive] F; communicatiue Q1 353 me] F; and me Q1 360-3] Q1; not in F 364] F; not in Q1 364 sd *Exit*] F; *Exit Roderigo* Q1 (after 362)

338 acerb bitter.

338 coloquintida Colocynth, a bitter apple used as a laxative, and according to Gerard's *Herbal* (1597) found in the Sinaitic desert and the southern coast of the Mediterranean.

339 for youth for a younger man.

342 Make Raise.

342 sanctimony holiness (of the marriage bond).

343 erring A quibble: (1) wandering; (2) sinful (because anti-Christian).

343 super-subtle exceptionally refined or delicate. Compare *Temp.* 2.1.42-3: 'of subtle, tender, and delicate temperance'.

346 clean out of the way a completely inappropriate course of action.

347 compassing achieving; with a pun on 'embracing'.

348 fast to in complete support of.

351 hearted deeply felt.

351 conjunctive allied.

354 Traverse! A military order for setting troops in motion; but it is not known whether it was for marching forward, retreating, or turning. As also in 2*H4* 3.2.272.

358 betimes early.

IAGO Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;  
 For I mine own gained knowledge should profane  
 If I would time expend with such a snipe  
 But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,  
 And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets  
 He's done my office. I know not if't be true  
 Yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind,  
 Will do as if for surety. He holds me well:  
 The better shall my purpose work on him.  
 Cassio's a proper man: let me see now;  
 To get his place and to plume up my will  
 In double knavery. How? How? Let's see.  
 After some time, to abuse Othello's ear  
 That he is too familiar with his wife;  
 He hath a person and a smooth dispose  
 To be suspected, framed to make women false.  
 The Moor is of a free and open nature,  
 That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,  
 And will as tenderly be led by the nose  
 As asses are.  
 I have't. It is engendered. Hell and night  
 Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light. *Exit*

2.1 *Enter MONTANO and two GENTLEMEN.*

MONTANO What from the cape can you discern at sea?

I GENTLEMAN Nothing at all; it is a high-wrought flood.

I cannot 'twixt the heaven and the main

Descry a sail.

367 a] Q1; not in F 370 He's] Ha's Q1; She ha's F 371 Yet] Q1; But F 375 his] F; this Q1 375 plume] F;  
 make Q1 376 In] F; A Q1 376 Let's] F; let me Q1 377 ear] Q1; eares F 379 hath] F; has Q1 381 is of] F;  
 not in Q1 381 nature] F; nature too Q1 382 seem] F; seemes Q1 383-4] F; one line in Q1 386 SD] Q1; not in F  
 Act 2, Scene 1 2.1] *Actus Secundus. Scena Prima.* F; *Actus 2. Scæna 1.* Q1 0 SD] F; *Enter Montanio, Governour of*  
*Cypres, with two other Gentlemen.* Q1 3 heaven] F; hauen Q1

366 gained knowledge practical wisdom and experience.

367 snipe A long-billed bird, used as a type of worthlessness.

371 kind regard.

372 surety certainty.

372 holds me well esteems me.

374 proper handsome.

375 plume glorify, set a plume in the cap of.

377 abuse deceive.

379 dispose manner, disposition.

383 tenderly easily, effortlessly.

383-4 be led...are Proverbial (Tilley N233, T221).

Act 2, Scene 1

0 SD MONTANO See note to list of characters, and Textual Analysis, p. 207 below.

2 high-wrought flood angry sea.

- MONTANO Methinks the wind does speak aloud at land, 5  
 A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements.  
 If it hath ruffianed so upon the sea,  
 What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,  
 Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?
- 2 GENTLEMAN A segregation of the Turkish fleet: 10  
 For do but stand upon the banning shore,  
 The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds;  
 The wind-shaked surge, with high and monstrous mane,  
 Seems to cast water on the burning Bear  
 And quench the guards of th'ever-fixèd Pole. 15  
 I never did like molestation view  
 On the enchafèd flood.

MONTANO If that the Turkish fleet  
 Be not ensheltered and embayed, they are drowned:  
 It is impossible they bear it out.

*Enter a third GENTLEMAN.*

- 3 GENTLEMAN News, lads! Our wars are done: 20  
 The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks  
 That their designment halts. A noble ship of Venice  
 Hath seen a grievous wrack and sufferance  
 On most part of their fleet.

MONTANO How? Is this true?

- 3 GENTLEMAN The ship is here put in, 25

5 does speak] Q1; hath spoke F 8 mountains] F; the huge mountaine Q1 8 on them] F; not in Q1 11 banning] Q1; Foaming F 12 chidden] F; chiding Q1 13 mane] Knight; Maine F; mayne Q1 15 fixèd] F; fired Q1 19 they] Q1; to F 19 SD third] Q1; not in F 20 lads! Our] F; Lords, your Q1 21 Turks] F; Turke Q1 22-3] F; That...seen / ...sufferance Q1 22 A noble] F; Another Q1 24 their] F; the Q1 25-6 The...Cassio] Q1; one line in F

7 ruffianed raged. Compare 2H4 3.1.22:  
 'ruffian billows'.

8 mountains mountainous seas.

9 hold the mortise keep their joints intact.

10 segregation dispersal.

11-12 the banning... clouds The idea is that the shore is cursing or forbidding the encroachment of the mountainous waves which then, so rebuked, fall back and rise up, seeming to strike the clouds. F's 'foaming shore' and Q1's 'chiding billows' give a rather different and less vivid picture; hence the editorial decision to conflate the more dramatic elements of Q1 and F.

13 monstrous mane mane like a wild beast. The pun is with 'main' (= sea).

14 Bear The constellation Ursa Minor.

15 guards The two stars in Ursa Minor, which were second in brightness to the Pole Star and used with it for navigation purposes, were known as the Guardians. See *Mac.* 4.1.53-4 for a similar metaphor of violent disruption, and for another allusion to the uniquely constant position of the Pole Star, *JC* 3.1.60-2.

16 like molestation similar upheaval.

17 enchafèd flood enraged sea.

18 embayed protected in a bay.

19 bear it out weather the storm.

22 designment halts enterprise is crippled.

23 sufferance damage.

A Veronesa; Michael Cassio,  
Lieutenant to the warlike Moor Othello,  
Is come on shore; the Moor himself at sea,  
And is in full commission here for Cyprus.

MONTANO I am glad on't; 'tis a worthy governor. 30

3 GENTLEMAN But this same Cassio, though he speak of comfort  
Touching the Turkish loss, yet he looks sadly  
And prays the Moor be safe; for they were parted  
With foul and violent tempest.

MONTANO Pray heaven he be;

For I have served him, and the man commands  
Like a full soldier. Let's to the seaside, ho!

As well to see the vessel that's come in  
As to throw out our eyes for brave Othello,  
Even till we make the main and th'aerial blue  
An indistinct regard.

3 GENTLEMAN Come, let's do so; 40

For every minute is expectancy  
Of more arrivance.

*Enter* CASSIO.

CASSIO Thanks, you the valiant of this warlike isle  
That so approve the Moor. O, let the heavens  
Give him defence against the elements, 45  
For I have lost him on a dangerous sea.

MONTANO Is he well shipped?

CASSIO His bark is stoutly timbered, and his pilot

Of very expert and approved allowance;  
Therefore my hopes, not surfeited to death, 50  
Stand in bold cure.

[*A shout*] *within*, 'A sail, a sail, a sail!'

28 on shore] F; ashore Q1 30] Q1; I...on't / ...governor F 33 prays] Q1; praye F 34 heaven] Q1; Heuens F  
36] F; Like...soldier / ...ho Q1 39-40 Even...regard] F; not in Q1 42 arrivance] Q1; Arriuançie F 43 you] F;  
to Q1 43 this] Q1; the F 43 warlike] F; worthy Q1 44 O] F; and Q1 45 the] F; their Q1 51 SD.1] *Within*.  
A Saile, a Saile, a Saile. F; *Mess.* A saile, a saile, a saile. Q1

26 Veronesa As this is 'a noble ship of Venice', it must presumably have been fitted out or built in Verona. It has been suggested that there may lie behind F's spelling 'Verennessa' some particular type of ship, perhaps a cutter whose name was derived from the Italian nautical term *verrinare* (= to cut through).

32 sadly gravely, seriously. Compare *Rom.* 1.1.199: 'Tell me in sadness, who is that you love.'

36 full perfect, complete.

39-40 the main...regard the sea and sky become indistinguishable.

41 is expectancy gives expectation.

42 arrivance people arriving.

44 approve honour.

49 approved allowance tested reputation.

50-1 not surfeited...cure not being excessively optimistic are nevertheless confident.

*Enter a MESSENGER.*

CASSIO What noise?

MESSENGER The town is empty; on the brow o'the sea  
Stand ranks of people and they cry, 'A sail!'

CASSIO My hopes do shape him for the governor.

55

*A shot [is heard within].*

2 GENTLEMAN They do discharge their shot of courtesy;  
Our friends at least.

CASSIO I pray you, sir, go forth,  
And give us truth who 'tis that is arrived.

2 GENTLEMAN I shall.

*Exit*

MONTANO But, good lieutenant, is your general wived?

60

CASSIO Most fortunately: he hath achieved a maid  
That paragons description and wild fame;  
One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens  
And in th'essential vesture of creation  
Does tire the ingener.

*Enter Second Gentleman.*

How now? Who's put in?

65

2 GENTLEMAN 'Tis one Iago, ancient to the general.

CASSIO He's had most favourable and happy speed:  
Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,  
The guttered rocks and congregated sands,  
Traitors encarp'd to clog the guiltless keel,

70

51 SD.2 *Enter a MESSENGER*] Q1; *not in F* 53 SH MESSENGER] Q1; *Gent. F* 55 governor] F; *guernement* Q1  
55 SD] *not in F*; *A shot.* Q1 (*after least at 57*) 56, 66, 94 SH 2 GENTLEMAN] 2 *Gent. Q1*; *Gent. F* 56 *their*] F; *the* Q1  
57 *friends*] F; *friend* Q1 59 SH 2 GENTLEMAN] 2 *Gen. Q1*; *Gent. F* 63 *quirks of*] F; *not in Q1* 65 *tire the ingener*] *Knight*; *tyre the Ingeniuer* F; *beare all excellency* Q1 65 *How*] F; *not in Q1* 67 SH CASSIO] F; *assigned to / 2 Gent. / in Q1* 68 *high*] F; *by* Q1 70 *encarp'd to clog*] Q1; *enstep'd, to enclodge* F

53 brow o' the sea cliff-edge.

55 My...for I hope it is.

62 paragons...fame equals extravagant praise  
and most unrestrained report.

63-5 Compare *Ant.* 5.2.97-100: 'Nature wants  
stuff / To vie strange forms with fancy; yet  
t' imagine / An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst  
fancy, / Condemning shadows quite.'

63 quirks extravagant conceits. Compare *Ado*  
2.3.236-7: 'some odd quirks and remnants of wit  
broken on me'.

63 blazoning Originally a heraldic term, this  
word had come to mean 'proclaiming the praises  
of'.

64 essential...creation absolute beauty of the  
human form.

65 tire the ingener outstrip the artist's imagin-  
ation, transcend human imagination; with a pun on  
'tire' (= clothe, attire). See supplementary note.

67 speed Celerity and fortune are both contained  
in the word here.

69 guttered jagged with gullies, furrowed.

70 encarp'd drawn up into ridges. F's 'enstep-  
ed' (= submerged) is accepted by most editors; but  
the tenor of Cassio's lines is that the natural features  
of the sea normally behave as active antagonists to  
shipping.



As having sense of beauty do omit  
 Their mortal natures, letting go safely by  
 The divine Desdemona.

MONTANO

What is she?

CASSIO She that I spake of, our great captain's captain,

Left in the conduct of the bold Iago,

Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts

A se'nnight's speed. Great Jove Othello guard

And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath,

That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,

Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms,

Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits,

And bring all Cyprus comfort.

*Enter* DESDEMONA, IAGO, EMILIA *and* RODERIGO.

O, behold,

The riches of the ship is come on shore!

You men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.

Hail to thee, lady! And the grace of heaven,

Before, behind thee, and on every hand,

Enwheel thee round.

DESDEMONA

I thank you, valiant Cassio.

What tidings can you tell me of my lord?

CASSIO He is not yet arrived; nor know I aught

But that he's well, and will be shortly here.

DESDEMONA O, but I fear – how lost you company?

CASSIO The great contention of the sea and skies

Parted our fellowship.

[*A shout*] *within*, '*A sail, a sail!*' [*A shot is heard.*]

But hark, a sail!

2 GENTLEMAN They give their greeting to the citadel:

This likewise is a friend.

72 mortal] F; common Q1 74] Q1; She...of / ...captain F 74 spake] F; spoke Q1 80 Make...in] F; And swiftly come to Q1 81] F; Giue...fire / ...spirits Q1 82 And...comfort] Q1; not in F 82 SD] Q1 (after 80); *Enter Desdemona, Iago, Rodorigo, and Emilia.* F (after 80) 83 on shore] F; ashore Q1 84 You] F; Ye Q1 88 me] Q1; not in F 91] Q1; O...fear / ...company F 92 the] Q1; not in F 93 SD *A shot is heard.*] *Capell subst.*; not in F, Q1 94 their] Q1; this F

71–2 omit...natures forbear to exercise their deadly natural propensities. There may also be an opposition implied between mortal and divine.

76 footing landing. Compare *John* 5.1.66: 'upon the footing of our land'.

77 se'nnight week.

79 tall gallant.

81 extincted extinguished, dulled; an allusion to the theory of humours.

87 Enwheel Encircle.

93 Parted our fellowship Separated our ships.

94 give their greeting i.e. by firing a salvo; compare 56 above.

CASSIO

See for the news.

95

[Exit Second Gentleman]

Good ancient, you are welcome. [To Emilia] Welcome,  
mistress.

Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,  
That I extend my manners. 'Tis my breeding  
That gives me this bold show of courtesy.

[He kisses Emilia.]

IAGO Sir, would she give you so much of her lips  
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me  
You would have enough.

100

DESDEMONA Alas, she has no speech.

IAGO In faith, too much:

I find it still when I have list to sleep.  
Marry, before your ladyship, I grant  
She puts her tongue a little in her heart  
And chides with thinking.

105

EMILIA You've little cause to say so.

IAGO Come on, come on; you are pictures out of doors, bells in  
your parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens, saints in your injuries,  
devils being offended, players in your housewifery, and  
housewives in your beds.

110

DESDEMONA O fie upon thee, slanderer!

IAGO Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk:

You rise to play and go to bed to work.

EMILIA You shall not write my praise.

IAGO No, let me not.

115

DESDEMONA What wouldst thou write of me, if thou shouldst  
praise me?

95 See...news] F; So speaks this voyce Q1 95 SD] Capell subst.; not in F, Q1 96 SD] Rowe; not in F, Q1 99 SD] Johnson subst.; not in F, Q1 100 Sir] F; For Q1 101 oft bestows] F; has bestowed Q1 103 In faith] F; I know Q1 104 still] F; I Q1 104 when] F; for when Q1 104 list] Q1; leaue F 108 of doors] of doore F; adores Q1 112 SH DESDEMONA] F; not in Q1 116] F; What...me / ...me Q1 116 thou write] Q1; write F

97 gall irritate.

98-9 extend...courtesy stretch my greeting,  
for it is my training in polished behaviour that  
guides me to this gesture of welcome.

104 still always.

104 list a desire.

105 before your ladyship in your ladyship's  
presence.

107 chides with thinking keeps her shrewish  
inclinations in her thoughts.

108-11 you are...beds Proverbial: 'Women

are in church saints, abroad angels, at home devils'  
(Tilley w702).

108 pictures silent appearances (of virtue).

108 bells i.e. noisy.

109 wild-cats spitfires.

109 saints in your injuries adopt a saintly air  
when you are claiming to be injured.

110 players deceivers, triflers.

111 housewives i.e. economical with your  
sexual favours; or perhaps 'hard workers'.

113 Turk i.e. infidel (and thus my word is not  
worthy of belief).

- IAGO O, gentle lady, do not put me to't,  
For I am nothing if not critical.
- DESDEMONA Come on, assay. There's one gone to the harbour?
- IAGO Ay, madam. 120
- DESDEMONA [*Aside*] I am not merry, but I do beguile  
The thing I am by seeming otherwise –  
Come, how wouldst thou praise me?
- IAGO I am about it, but indeed my invention  
Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze – 125  
It plucks out brains and all. But my muse labours,  
And thus she is delivered:  
'If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,  
The one's for use, the other useth it.'
- DESDEMONA Well praised! How if she be black and witty? 130
- IAGO 'If she be black, and thereto have a wit,  
She'll find a white that shall her blackness fit.'
- DESDEMONA Worse and worse.
- EMILIA How if fair and foolish?
- IAGO 'She never yet was foolish that was fair,  
For even her folly helped her to an heir.' 135
- DESDEMONA These are old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh  
i'th'alehouse. What miserable praise hast thou for her that's foul  
and foolish?
- IAGO 'There's none so foul and foolish thereunto,  
But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do.' 140
- DESDEMONA O heavy ignorance! Thou praisest the worst best. But  
what praise couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed? One

119] Q1; Come... assay / ...harbour F 121 SD] conj. *Delius*; not in F, Q1 124–6] Q1; as prose in F 126 brains] F; braine Q1 129 useth] F; vsing Q1 130] Q1; Well praised / ...witty F 132 fit] F; hit Q1 135 an heir] F; a haire Q1 136–8] F; These...alehouse / ...her / ...foolish Q1 136 fond] F; not in Q1 141 Thou praisest] F; that praises Q1

119 assay try, tackle it.

121–2 beguile... I am divert attention from my state of anxiety. Compare *Tit.* 4.1.35: 'beguile thy sorrow'.

125 birdlime A sticky substance spread on bushes to catch small birds; compare *3H6* 5.6.13: 'The bird that hath been limed in a bush'.

125 frieze A coarse woollen cloth (from which birdlime would be difficult to remove).

126 labours A quibble: (1) works hard; (2) tries to give birth.

127 is delivered A quibble: (1) produces; (2) gives birth.

130 black dark-haired or brown-complexioned; and thus by Jacobean standards 'ugly'.

130 witty quick of apprehension.

132 white The pun is on (1) fair lover; (2) wight (= person).

132 fit suit. Like Q1's 'hit' this word contains a sexual innuendo.

135 folly The pun is on (1) foolishness; (2) unchastity. Compare 5.2.133: 'She turned to folly, and she was a whore.'

136 old fond paradoxes hackneyed and foolish sayings; as 'Fair and foolish, long and lazy, little and loud' (Tilley F28).

137 foul ugly, sluttish.

139 thereunto in addition.

that in the authority of her merit did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself?

IAGO 'She that was ever fair, and never proud, 145  
 Had tongue at will, and yet was never loud;  
 Never lacked gold, and yet went never gay;  
 Fled from her wish, and yet said "Now I may";  
 She that being angered, her revenge being nigh,  
 Bade her wrong stay, and her displeasure fly; 150  
 She that in wisdom never was so frail  
 To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail;  
 She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind,  
 See suitors following and not look behind;  
 She was a wight, if ever such wight were —' 155

DESDEMONA To do what?

IAGO 'To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.'

DESDEMONA O, most lame and impotent conclusion! Do not learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy husband. How say you, Cassio, is he not a most profane and liberal counsellor? 160

CASSIO He speaks home, madam; you may relish him more in the soldier than in the scholar.

IAGO [*Aside*] He takes her by the palm. Ay, well said; whisper. With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do. I will gyve thee in thine own courtship. 165  
 You say true, 'tis so indeed. If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the

143 merit] F; merrits Q1 154] F; not in Q1 155 such wight] Q1; such wightes F 157-60] F; O...conclusion / ... husband / ...liberal / ...counsellor Q1 161-2] F; He...him / ...scholar Q1 163 SD] Rowe; not in F, Q1 164 With] F; not in Q1 164 I] F; not in Q1 164 fly] F; Flee Q1 165 gyve...courtship] F; catch you in your owne courtesies Q1 167 kissed] F; rist Q1

143-4 put on the vouch of very commend the testimony of even. Compare *H8* 1.1.157-8: 'To th'King I'll say't, and make my vouch as strong / As shore of rock.'

147 gay elaborately dressed.

152 To change...tail The exact meaning is obscure. On the surface it apparently means 'to exchange something worthless for something more valuable'; but there is clearly sexual innuendo in 'cod's head' (= penis) and 'tail' (= pudendum).

152 change exchange, accept.

155 wight person.

157 chronicle small beer keep petty household accounts, be concerned with trivialities.

160 profane worldly; ribald (*OED* sv a 3).

160 liberal licentious. Compare *Ham.* 4.7.170: 'That liberal shepherds give a grosser name'.

161 home directly and to the point (a term from fencing). Compare *Ant.* 1.2.105: 'Speak to me home, mince not the general tongue.'

161 relish him more in appreciate him better in the character of.

163 well said well done. Compare *Tit.* 4.3.64: 'Now, masters, draw. [*They shoot.*] O, well said, Lucius.'

165 gyve...courtship fetter, shackle yourself in your own courtly manners.

167-8 kissed...oft A courtly gesture of a gentleman to a lady; compare *LLL* 4.1.145-6: 'To see him walk before a lady... / To see him kiss his hand'.

sir in. Very good, well kissed, an excellent courtesy! 'Tis so indeed. Yet again your fingers to your lips? Would they were clyster-pipes for your sake! 170

*Trumpets within.*

The Moor! I know his trumpet.

CASSIO

'Tis truly so.

DESDEMONA Let's meet him and receive him.

CASSIO

Lo, where he comes!

*Enter OTHELLO and ATTENDANTS.*

OTHELLO O, my fair warrior!

DESDEMONA My dear Othello!

OTHELLO It gives me wonder great as my content 175

To see you here before me. O, my soul's joy,

If after every tempest come such calms,

May the winds blow till they have wakened death,

And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas,

Olympus-high, and duck again as low 180

As hell's from heaven. If it were now to die,

'Twere now to be most happy; for I fear

My soul hath her content so absolute

That not another comfort like to this

Succeeds in unknown fate.

DESDEMONA The heavens forbid 185

But that our loves and comforts should increase,

Even as our days do grow.

OTHELLO Amen to that, sweet powers!

I cannot speak enough of this content;

It stops me here; it is too much of joy.

*They kiss.*

And this, and this, the greatest discords be 190

169 Very] F; not in Q1 169 an] Q1; and F 170 to] F; at Q1 171 SD] Q1; not in F 173 SD] F; follows 172 trumpet in Q1 176] Q1; To...me / ...joy F 177 calms] F; calmnesse Q1 186] Q1; But...loves / ...increase F 187 powers] F; power Q1 189 SD] Q1 (after 190); not in F 190 discords] F; discord Q1

169 sir fine gentleman.

171 clyster-pipes medical syringes for enemas and vaginal douches.

172 trumpet trumpet-call. Each commander had his own recognisable signal; compare *MV* 5.1.122: 'Your husband is at hand, I hear his trumpet.'

175 my content the fulfilment of my desire.

177 Proverbial (Tilley 9908).

185 Succeeds The present tense is used for the subjunctive.

189 stops me here i.e. prevents me in my heart.

That e'er our hearts shall make.

IAGO [*Aside*] O, you are well tuned now!  
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,  
As honest as I am.

OTHELLO Come, let us to the castle.  
News, friends; our wars are done; the Turks are drowned.  
How does my old acquaintance of this isle? 195  
Honey, you shall be well desired in Cyprus;  
I have found great love amongst them. O my sweet,  
I prattle out of fashion and I dote  
In mine own comforts. I prithee, good Iago,  
Go to the bay and disembark my coffers; 200  
Bring thou the master to the citadel;  
He is a good one, and his worthiness  
Does challenge much respect. Come, Desdemona,  
Once more well met at Cyprus!

*Exeunt [all except Iago and Roderigo]*

IAGO [*To a departing Attendant*] Do thou meet me presently at the 205  
harbour. [*To Roderigo*] Come hither. If thou be'st valiant – as  
they say base men being in love have then a nobility in their  
natures more than is native to them – list me. The lieutenant  
tonight watches on the court of guard. First, I must tell thee this:  
Desdemona is directly in love with him. 210

RODERIGO With him? Why, 'tis not possible!

IAGO Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark me  
with what violence she first loved the Moor but for bragging and  
telling her fantastical lies. And will she love him still for prating?

191 SD] *Rowe*; not in F, Q1 191–3 O...am] Q1; *prose in F* 194] Q1; News...done / ...drowned F 195 does] F;  
doe Q1 195 my] F; our Q1 195 this] F; the Q1 199 own] F; one Q1 204 SD] *Cam. subst.*; *Exit Othello and*  
*Desdemona. F*; *Exit. Q1* 205 SD] *Delius subst.*; not in F, Q1 206 SD] *Capell*; not in F, Q1 206 hither] Q1; thither F  
209 must] F; will Q1 214 And will she] Q1; To F

192 set down the pegs i.e. slacken the strings  
(as of a stringed instrument).

193 As honest as I am For all my supposed  
honesty.

196 well desired warmly welcomed (and sought  
out as a guest).

198 out of fashion irrelevantly.

199 comforts happiness.

200 coffers boxes and trunks.

201 master captain (of the ship that brought  
me).

203 challenge claim, deserve.

205 presently Normally this word means  
'immediately', but here it appears to have its  
modern sense.

206–8 as they...them Compare 'Love makes  
the villain courteous' (proverbial).

207 base lowly born.

209 court of guard guard-house.

210 directly undoubtedly.

212 thus i.e. on his lips. The phrase is proverbial  
for 'keep quiet' (Tilley F239).

213 but only.

214 still continually.

Let not thy discreet heart think it. Her eye must be fed. And  
 215 what delight shall she have to look on the devil? When the blood  
 is made dull with the act of sport, there should be, again to  
 inflame it and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in  
 favour, sympathy in years, manners and beauties: all which the  
 Moor is defective in. Now for want of these required conveniences,  
 220 her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to heave the  
 gorge, disrelish and abhor the Moor. Very nature will instruct  
 her in it, and compel her to some second choice. Now, sir, this  
 granted – as it is a most pregnant and unforced position – who  
 stands so eminent in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does? –  
 225 a knave very voluble; no further conscionable than in putting on  
 the mere form of civil and humane seeming for the better  
 compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection.  
 Why none; why none – a slipper and subtle knave, a finder  
 out of occasions, that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit  
 230 advantages, though true advantage never present itself; a  
 devilish knave! Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath  
 all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after.  
 A pestilent complete knave; and the woman hath found him  
 already. 235

RODERIGO I cannot believe that in her; she's full of most blest  
 condition.

IAGO Blest fig's end! The wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she

215 thy] F; the Q1 215 it] F; so Q1 217 again] Q1; a game F 218 to give] F; giue Q1 218 satiety] F; satiety  
 Q1 218 loveliness] F; Loue lines Q1 221 in] F; to Q1 225 eminent] F; eminently Q1 227 humane] F; hand-  
 Q1 228 compassing] Q1; compass F 228 most] F; not in Q1 228 loose] F; not in Q1 228 affection] F; affections  
 Q1 229 Why...none] F; not in Q1 229 slipper and subtle] F; subtle slippery Q1 230 out] Q1; not in F  
 230 occasions] Q1; occasion F 230 has] Q1; he's F 231 advantages] F; the true aduantages Q1  
 231 though...advantage] F; not in Q1 231 itself] F; themselues Q1 231-2 a...knave] F; not in Q1 234 hath] F;  
 has Q1

216 devil See 1.1.92 n.

217 sport coitus. Compare *Lear* 1.1.22-3: 'yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making'.

219 favour appearance.

219 sympathy agreement, correspondence.

220 required conveniences requisite conditions of sexual desire. Compare *Tro.* 3.3.6-8: 'expos'd myself / From certain and possess'd conveniences / To doubtful fortunes'.

221 tenderness...abused sensibility will find itself disgusted.

221-2 heave the gorge vomit.

222 Very nature Natural reactions themselves.

224 pregnant cogent.

224 position hypothesis.

225 in the degree as next in line for.

226 voluble plausible, glib.

226 conscionable conscientious.

227 humane polite.

228 salt lecherous. Compare *Ant.* 2.1.21: 'Salt Cleopatra'.

229 slipper slippery.

230 occasions opportunities.

230 stamp coin.

233 green unripe; hence 'immature'. Compare *Ant.* 1.5.74: 'when I was green in judgment'.

234 found him seen sympathetically what he is after.

236-7 blest condition heavenly disposition.

238 fig's end See 1.3.313 n.

had been blest she would never have loved the Moor. Blest pudding! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? Didst not mark that? 240

RODERIGO Yes, that I did; but that was but courtesy.

IIAGO Lechery, by this hand: an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together – villainous thoughts, Roderigo! When these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, the incorporate conclusion. Pish! But, sir, be you ruled by me. I have brought you from Venice; watch you tonight; for the command, I'll lay't upon you. Cassio knows you not; I'll not be far from you. Do you find some occasion to anger Cassio, either by speaking too loud or tainting his discipline, or from what other course you please, which the time shall more favourably minister. 245 250

RODERIGO Well.

IIAGO Sir, he's rash and very sudden in choler, and haply with his truncheon may strike at you: provoke him that he may; for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny, whose qualification shall come into no true taste again but by the displanting of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your desires by the means I shall then have to prefer them, and the impediment most profitably removed without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity. 255 260

RODERIGO I will do this, if you can bring it to any opportunity.

IIAGO I warrant thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel. I must fetch his necessaries ashore. Farewell. 265

RODERIGO Adieu.

*Exit*

239-40 Blest pudding] F; not in Q1 240-1 Didst...that] F; not in Q1 242 that I did] F; not in Q1 243 obscure] F; not in Q1 245-6 villainous...Roderigo] F; not in Q1 246 mutualities] Q1; mutabilities F 246 hard] F; hand Q1 247 master and] F; not in Q1 248 Pish] F; not in Q1 249 the] F; your Q1 252 course] F; cause Q1 255-6 with his truncheon] Q1; not in F 258 taste] F; trust Q1 258 again] F; again 't Q1 261 the] F; not in Q1 263 you] F; I Q1

240 paddle with stroke suggestively. Compare *WT* 1.2.115: 'to be paddling palms and pinching fingers'.

243 index...to indicator of; lit. 'table of contents prefacing'. Compare *R3* 2.2.149: 'As index to the story we late talk'd of'.

246 mutualities reciprocal intimacies.

247 incorporate carnal, bodily.

252 tainting disparaging, sneering at. Compare *H8* 3.1.55: 'To taint that honor every good tongue blesses'.

253 minister provide.

255 haply perhaps.

256 truncheon baton of office.

258 qualification...again i.e. appeasement shall not be reattained (lit. 'allayment shall not make it able to be swallowed').

260 prefer forward, promote.

264 warrant assure.

264 by and by immediately.

265 his i.e. Othello's.



IAGO That Cassio loves her, I do well believe't;  
 That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit.  
 The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,  
 Is of a constant, loving, noble nature; 270  
 And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona  
 A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too,  
 Not out of absolute lust – though peradventure  
 I stand accountant for as great a sin –  
 But partly led to diet my revenge, 275  
 For that I do suspect the lusty Moor  
 Hath leaped into my seat, the thought whereof  
 Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards;  
 And nothing can or shall content my soul  
 Till I am evened with him, wife for wife; 280  
 Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor  
 At least into a jealousy so strong  
 That judgement cannot cure. Which thing to do,  
 If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trace  
 For his quick hunting, stand the putting on, 285  
 I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,  
 Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb –  
 For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too –  
 Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,  
 For making him egregiously an ass, 290  
 And practising upon his peace and quiet  
 Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused;  
 Knavery's plain face is never seen till used. *Exit*

270 loving, noble] F; noble, louing Q1 276 lusty] F; lustfull Q1 279 or] F; nor Q1 280 evened] F; euen Q1  
 284 trace] F; crush Q1; trash *Steevens*<sup>2</sup>; leash *conj. Bailey* 287 rank] Q1; right F 288 cap] Q1; Cape F

268 apt...credit likely and most believable.

272–4 Now, I do...sin In Cinthio's source story, 'the wicked Ensign...fell ardently in love with Disdemona' (Bullough, vii, 243–4).

274 accountant accountable.

275 diet feed.

277 leaped...seat For a similar sexual connotation in an equestrian metaphor, see Cleopatra's exclamation in *Ant.* 1.5.21: 'O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!'

278 mineral drug.

284–5 trace...hunting follow after because of

his lively sexual pursuit (of Desdemona). For a discussion of the many suggested emendations, see supplementary note.

285 stand the putting on persist in doing what I incite him to. Compare *Cor.* 2.3.251–2: 'Say you ne'er had done't...but by our putting on.'

286 on the hip at my mercy. Proverbial (Tilley H474).

287 Abuse Slander.

287 rank garb lascivious manner.

291 practising upon plotting against.

## 2.2 Enter Othello's HERALD with a proclamation.

HERALD It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that upon certain tidings now arrived importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph: some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him; for besides these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial. So much was his pleasure should be proclaimed. All offices are open, and there is full liberty of feasting from this present hour of five till the bell have told eleven. Heaven bless the isle of Cyprus and our noble general Othello!

Exit

## [2.3] Enter OTHELLO, DESDEMONA, CASSIO and ATTENDANTS.

OTHELLO Good Michael, look you to the guard tonight.

Let's teach ourselves that honourable stop,

Not to out-sport discretion.

CASSIO Iago hath direction what to do;

But notwithstanding with my personal eye

Will I look to't.

OTHELLO Iago is most honest.

Michael, good night; tomorrow with your earliest

Let me have speech with you – Come, my dear love,

The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue;

Act 2, Scene 2 2.2] *Scena Secunda*. F; not in Q1 0 SD Othello's HERALD with] F; a Gentleman reading Q1 1 SH HERALD] F; not in Q1 3 every] F; that every Q1 4 to make] F; make Q1 5 addiction] Q2; addition F; minde Q1 6 nuptial] F; Nuptialls Q1 7–8 of feasting] F; not in Q1 8 have] F; hath Q1 9 Heaven] Q1; not in F 10 SD] F; not in Q1 Act 2, Scene 3 2.3] not in F, Q1 0 SD DESDEMONA...ATTENDANTS] F; Cassio and Desdemona Q1 2 that] F; the Q1 4 direction] F; directed Q1

## Act 2, Scene 2

2 upon certain because of reliable.

2 mere perdition total loss. Compare *Tro*.

1.3.110–11: 'what discord follows. Each thing meets / In mere oppugnancy'; and *H5* 3.6.98–9: 'The perdition of th'athversary hath been very great.'

3 triumph public festivity.

5 addiction inclination. Compare *H5* 1.1.54: 'Since his addiction was to courses vain'. Q1's 'mind' is possible, but seems a rather plain word for the inflated style of the proclamation.

7 offices e.g. kitchens, cellars, butteries (for the distribution of food and drink). Compare *Mac*. 2.1.13: 'Sent forth great largess to your offices'.

8 told struck, counted.

## Act 2, Scene 3

2 stop restraint.

3 out-sport discretion celebrate to excess.

7 with your earliest at your earliest convenience.

9–10 The purchase...you i.e. our marriage has yet to be consummated.

That profit's yet to come 'tween me and you.

10

Good night.

*Exeunt Othello, Desdemona [and Attendants]*

*Enter IAGO.*

CASSIO Welcome, Iago; we must to the watch.

IAGO Not this hour, lieutenant; 'tis not yet ten o'th'clock. Our general cast us thus early for the love of his Desdemona; who let us not therefore blame: he hath not yet made wanton the night with her, and she is sport for Jove.

15

CASSIO She's a most exquisite lady.

IAGO And I'll warrant her full of game.

CASSIO Indeed she is a most fresh and delicate creature.

IAGO What an eye she has! Methinks it sounds a parley to provocation.

20

CASSIO An inviting eye, and yet methinks right modest.

IAGO And when she speaks, is it not an alarum to love?

CASSIO She is indeed perfection.

IAGO Well, happiness to their sheets! Come, lieutenant, I have a stoup of wine, and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants, that would fain have a measure to the health of the black Othello.

25

CASSIO Not tonight, good Iago; I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking. I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.

30

IAGO O, they are our friends – but one cup; I'll drink for you.

CASSIO I have drunk but one cup tonight, and that was craftily qualified too; and behold what innovation it makes here. I am unfortunate in the infirmity and dare not task my weakness with any more.

35

10 That] F; The Q1 10 'tween] F; twixt Q1 11 sd] *Exit Othello and Desdemona.* Q1; *Exit.* F 13 o'th'] F; a Q1 20 to] F; of Q1 22] Q1; An...eye / ...modest F 23] Q1; And...speaks / ...love F 23 is it not] F; tis Q1 23 alarum] F; alarme Q1 24 She] F; It Q1 27 of the] Q1; of F 34 unfortunate] Q1; infortunate F

13 Not this hour Not for an hour yet.  
14 cast dismissed.  
16 sport See 2.1.217 n.  
18 full of game sexually active. Compare *Per.* 4.6.74–5: 'Were you a gamester at five, or at seven?'  
20–1 sounds a parley to provocation Lit. 'summons sexual desire to a meeting'.  
23 alarum call to arms. Compare 2*H6* 2.3.92: 'Sound, trumpets, alarum to the combatants.'

25 stoup A tankard of two quarts.  
27 fain have a measure gladly drink a toast.  
28 unhappy i.e. productive of an unfortunate outcome.  
31 for you in your place.  
33 qualified diluted.  
33 innovation disturbance. Compare 1*H4* 5.1.78: 'hurly-burly innovation'.  
33 here i.e. in my head.

IAGO What, man! 'Tis a night of revels; the gallants desire it.

CASSIO Where are they?

IAGO Here at the door; I pray you call them in.

CASSIO I'll do't, but it dislikes me.

*Exit*

IAGO If I can fasten but one cup upon him,

40

With that which he hath drunk tonight already,

He'll be as full of quarrel and offence

As my young mistress' dog. Now my sick fool Roderigo,

Whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out,

To Desdemona hath tonight caroused

45

Potations pottle-deep, and he's to watch.

Three lads of Cyprus, noble swelling spirits,

That hold their honours in a wary distance,

The very elements of this warlike isle,

Have I tonight flustered with flowing cups;

50

And they watch too. Now, 'mongst this flock of  
drunkards,

Am I to put our Cassio in some action

That may offend the isle. But here they come.

*Enter Cassio, MONTANO and GENTLEMEN.*

If consequence do but approve my dream,

My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

55

CASSIO 'Fore God, they have given me a rouse already.

MONTANO Good faith, a little one; not past a pint, as I am a soldier.

IAGO Some wine, ho!

43] Q1; As...dog / ...Roderigo F 44 hath] F; has Q1 44 out] F; outward Q1 47 lads] Q1; else F 48 honours] F; honour Q1 51] Q1; And...too / ...drunkards F 51 they] F; the Q1 52 Am I to put] Am I put to F; I am to put Q1 53] F; That...isle / ...come Q1 53 SD] F; Enter Montano, Cassio, and others. Q1 56 God] Q1; heauen F 57] F; Good...pint / ...soldier Q1

39 dislikes displeases.

42 offence readiness to take umbrage.

43 my young mistress' dog i.e. a spoilt pet (proverbial).

43 sick love-sick.

46 pottle-deep to the bottom of the tankard.

47 lads F's 'else' has been defended as meaning 'others'; but the supporting passages in *Ham.* 1.4.33 and *John* 2.1.276 are not convincing. Some editors have suggested the error in F was due to a misreading of 'Ls' or 'Lds', common manuscript abbreviations for 'lords'; but Q1's 'lads' precludes the necessity for further textual speculation.

47 swelling arrogant.

48 hold...distance are quick to take offence at anything resembling an insult to their honour.

49 very elements characteristic types.

50 flustered excited, befuddled.

51 watch are awake.

52 put incite.

54 consequence what happens, future events. Compare *Rom.* 1.4.107: 'Some consequence yet hanging in the stars'.

54 approve substantiate. Compare *MV* 3.2.79: 'approve it with a text'.

56 rouse large bumper of drink.

[Sings]

And let me the cannikin clink, clink,

And let me the cannikin clink;

A soldier's a man,

O, man's life's but a span,

Why then, let a soldier drink.

Some wine, boys!

CASSIO 'Fore God, an excellent song.

IAGO I learned it in England, where indeed they are most potent in potting. Your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander – drink, ho! – are nothing to your English.

CASSIO Is your Englishman so exquisite in his drinking?

IAGO Why, he drinks you with facility your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next pottle can be filled.

CASSIO To the health of our general!

MONTANO I am for it, lieutenant, and I'll do you justice.

IAGO O sweet England!

[Sings]

King Stephen was and a worthy peer,

His breeches cost him but a crown;

He held them sixpence all too dear,

With that he called the tailor lown.

He was a wight of high renown,

And thou art but of low degree;

'Tis pride that pulls the country down;

Then take thine auld cloak about thee.

Some wine, ho!

59, 76 SD] *Rowe*; not in F, Q1 60 clink] F; clinke, clinke Q1 61–2] *Capell*; one line in F, Q1 62 O, man's] F; a Q1 63] F; one line in Q1 65 God] Q1; Heauen F 69 Englishman] Q1; Englishmen F 69 exquisite] F; expert Q1 75–6] F; one line in Q1 76 and] F; not in Q1 83 Then] Q1; *And* F 83 thine] Q1; *thy* F 83 auld] Q2; *awl'd* F; *ow'd* Q1

59–63 See supplementary note.

59 cannikin small drinking-can.

62 man's life's but a span An allusion to the version of Ps. 39.6 in the Book of Common Prayer: 'thou hast made my days as it were a span long'; compare Tilley L251. 'Span' = short time.

66–7 potent in potting heavy drinkers. On the continent the English had a reputation for being drunkards from the early sixteenth century; but some Elizabethan social commentators tended to date the nation's alcoholic addiction from the bad habits brought back by soldiers returning from the wars in the Netherlands.

67 swag-bellied pendulously paunched.

69 exquisite accomplished.

71 Almain German.

74 do you justice match your pledge.

76–83 See supplementary note.

76 and Introduced as an extra syllable for metrical reasons, as in 'When that I was and a little tine boy' (*TN* 5.1.389).

79 lown rascal, rogue.

82 pride ostentation, extravagance.

- CASSIO 'Fore God, this is a more exquisite song than the other. 85
- IAGO Will you hear't again?
- CASSIO No, for I hold him to be unworthy of his place that does those things. Well, God's above all, and there be souls must be saved, and there be souls must not be saved.
- IAGO It's true, good lieutenant. 90
- CASSIO For mine own part – no offence to the general, nor any man of quality – I hope to be saved.
- IAGO And so do I too, lieutenant.
- CASSIO Ay, but by your leave, not before me; the lieutenant is to be saved before the ancient. Let's have no more of this; let's to our affairs. God forgive us our sins! Gentlemen, let's look to our business. Do not think, gentlemen, I am drunk; this is my ancient, this is my right hand, and this is my left hand. I am not drunk now, I can stand well enough, and I speak well enough. 95
- ALL Excellent well. 100
- CASSIO Why, very well then; you must not think then that I am drunk. *Exit*
- MONTANO To the platform, masters. Come, let's set the watch.
- IAGO You see this fellow that is gone before,  
 He is a soldier fit to stand by Caesar 105  
 And give direction. And do but see his vice –  
 'Tis to his virtue a just equinox,  
 The one as long as th'other. 'Tis pity of him.  
 I fear the trust Othello puts him in,  
 On some odd time of his infirmity, 110  
 Will shake this island.
- MONTANO But is he often thus?
- IAGO 'Tis evermore the prologue to his sleep:  
 He'll watch the horologe a double set,  
 If drink rock not his cradle.
- MONTANO It were well
- 85 'Fore God] Q1; Why F 87 to be] F; not in Q1 88 God's] Q1; heau'ns F 88 must] F; that must Q1 89 and there... saved] F; not in Q1 93 too] F; not in Q1 96 God] Q1; not in F 98 hand] Q1; not in F 99 I] F; not in Q1 100 SH ALL] Q1; Gent. F 101 Why] F; not in Q1 101 think then] F; think Q1 109 puts] F; put Q1 112 the] Q1; his F 114–15 It...it] F; one line in Q1
- 88 God's above all Proverbial phrase (Tilley H348).  
 92 quality rank.  
 103 platform gun ramparts.  
 105 stand by 'be lieutenant to', or perhaps 'be the equal of'.
- 107 just equinox exact equivalent; i.e. the darkness of his vice counterbalances exactly the light of his virtue.  
 110 odd time chance moment.  
 113 watch...set stay awake for two revolutions of the clock.

The general were put in mind of it.  
 Perhaps he sees it not, or his good nature  
 Prizes the virtue that appears in Cassio  
 And looks not on his evils: is not this true?

115

*Enter* RODERIGO.

IAGO [*Aside to Roderigo*] How now, Roderigo?

I pray you after the lieutenant, go.

120

*Exit Roderigo*

MONTANO And 'tis great pity that the noble Moor  
 Should hazard such a place as his own second  
 With one of an ingraft infirmity;  
 It were an honest action to say so  
 To the Moor.

IAGO Not I, for this fair island:

125

I do love Cassio well, and would do much  
 To cure him of this evil.

[*A cry of*] '*Help, help!*' *within.*

But hark! what noise?

*Enter Cassio, pursuing Roderigo.*

CASSIO Zounds, you rogue, you rascal!

MONTANO What's the matter, lieutenant?

CASSIO A knave teach me my duty! I'll beat the knave into a  
 twiggen bottle. 130

RODERIGO Beat me?

CASSIO Dost thou prate, rogue?

[*He strikes Roderigo.*]

MONTANO Nay, good lieutenant, I pray you, sir, hold your hand.

CASSIO Let me go, sir; or I'll knock you o'er the mazzard.

135

MONTANO Come, come, you're drunk.

117 Prizes] F; Praises Q1 117 virtue] F; vertues Q1 118 looks] F; looke Q1 119 SD] *Capell*; not in F, Q1  
 120 SD] Q1; not in F 124-5 It...Moor] F; one line in Q1 125 Not] F; Nor Q1 127 SD.1] *Helpe, helpe, within* Q1;  
 not in F 127 SD.2 *pursuing*] F; *driuing in* Q1 128 Zounds] Q1; not in F 130 I'll] F; but I'le Q1 131 twiggen] F;  
 wicker Q1 133 SD] *Capell subst.*; not in F, Q1 134] Q1; Nay...lieutenant / ...hand F 134 Nay] F; not in Q1  
 134 I pray you] F; pray Q1 135] Q1; Let...sir / ...mazzard F

122-3 hazard...With risk giving the position of lieutenant to.

123 ingraft deep-rooted. Compare *Lear* 1.1.297: 'the imperfections of long-ingraff'd condition'.

131 twiggen covered with wicker-work. Cassio

may mean he will so pattern Roderigo's hide with his sword, or that he will chase him through the holes in the wicker-work.

135 mazzard head, skull. Compare *Ham.* 5.1.89-90: 'knock'd about the mazzard with a sexton's spade'.

CASSIO Drunk?

*They fight.*

IAGO [*Aside to Roderigo*] Away I say, go out and cry a mutiny.

[*Exit Roderigo*]

Nay, good lieutenant; God's will, gentlemen!

Help ho! Lieutenant, sir! Montano, sir!

140

Help, masters, here's a goodly watch indeed!

*A bell rings.*

Who's that which rings the bell? Diabolo, ho!

The town will rise. God's will, lieutenant, hold!

You will be shamed forever.

*Enter Othello, and GENTLEMEN with weapons.*

OTHELLO What is the matter here?

MONTANO Zounds, I bleed still.

145

I am hurt to th'death.

OTHELLO Hold for your lives!

IAGO Hold ho, lieutenant, sir; Montano, gentlemen,

Have you forgot all place of sense and duty?

Hold! the general speaks to you; hold, for shame!

OTHELLO Why, how now, ho! From whence ariseth this?

150

Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that

Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?

For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.

137 SD] Q1; not in F 138 SD.1 *Aside to Roderigo*] Capell; not in F, Q1 138 SD.2 *Exit Roderigo*] Q2; not in F, Q1  
139 God's will] Q1; Alas F 140 Montano, sir] Q1; Montano F 141 SD] *A bell rung*: Q1 (after 138); not in F  
142 which] F; that Q1 143 God's...hold!] Q1; Fie, fie Lieutenant, F 144 You will be shamed] Q1; You'le be asham'd F  
144 SD GENTLEMEN with weapons] Q1; Attendants F 145-6 Zounds...death] one line in Q1; I bleed still, I am  
hurt to th' death. He dies. F 145 Zounds] Q1; not in F 147 ho] F; hold Q1 148 place of sense] F, Q1; sense of  
place Hanmer 149 hold] F; hold, hold Q1 150 ariseth] F; arises Q1 152 hath] F; has Q1

138 mutiny riot. Compare *Rom.* 1.5.80: 'You'll make a mutiny among my guests.'

142 bell warning-bell.

142 Diabolo Devil (Spanish).

143 rise grow riotous.

146 After 'death' F adds 'He dies' which is, if taken as a misplaced stage direction, obviously an error, since Montano speaks again at 178-88 and 199-201. It has been suggested that the words may be a desperate threat against Cassio as Montano attempts to lunge at him, or possibly an interjection of horror by Iago or another bystander with the speech heading having been dropped by F's compositor. Q2 attempts to correct F by substituting 'He faints', which some editors adopt.

148 place of dignity derived from. Hanmer's emendation 'sense of place and duty' is attractive as it recognises a type of inversion error common in the dramatic texts of the period, though not adopted here because the text makes sense as it stands.

151 turned Turks Proverbial (Tilley T609), but especially apt here.

151-2 to ourselves...Ottomites i.e. slaughter our own soldiers, which God has prevented the Turks from doing (by sending the storm that destroyed their fleet).

152 forbid prevented. Compare *Tro.* 1.3.302: 'Now heavens forbid such scarcity of youth' (F text).



He that stirs next to carve for his own rage  
 Holds his soul light: he dies upon his motion. 155  
 Silence that dreadful bell: it frights the isle  
 From her propriety. What is the matter, masters?  
 Honest Iago, that looks dead with grieving,  
 Speak. Who began this? On thy love, I charge thee.

IAGO I do not know. Friends all but now, even now, 160  
 In quarter and in terms like bride and groom,  
 Divesting them for bed; and then but now –  
 As if some planet had unwitting men –  
 Swords out and tilting one at other's breasts  
 In opposition bloody. I cannot speak 165  
 Any beginning to this peevish odds:  
 And would in action glorious I had lost  
 Those legs that brought me to a part of it.

OTHELLO How comes it, Michael, you are thus forgot?

CASSIO I pray you pardon me, I cannot speak. 170

OTHELLO Worthy Montano, you were wont be civil:  
 The gravity and stillness of your youth  
 The world hath noted; and your name is great  
 In mouths of wisest censure. What's the matter  
 That you unlace your reputation thus, 175  
 And spend your rich opinion for the name  
 Of a night-brawler? Give me answer to it.

MONTANO Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger;  
 Your officer Iago can inform you –  
 While I spare speech, which something now offends me – 180  
 Of all that I do know; nor know I aught

154 for] F; forth Q1 162 for] F; to Q1 164 breasts] F; breast Q1 168 Those] F; These Q1 169 comes...are] F; came...were Q1 171 be] Q1; to be F 174 mouths] F; men Q1

154 *carve for his own rage* strike with his sword as his fury prompts him.

155 *Holds his soul light* Values his life at little worth.

157 *From her propriety* Out of its natural state (of peace). Compare *TN* 5.1.146–7: 'it is the baseness of thy fear / That makes thee strangle thy propriety'.

161 *quarter* conduct.

161 *in terms* standing in relation to each other. Compare *Lear* 1.2.156: 'Parted you in good terms?'

162 *Divesting* Undressing.

163 *As if...men* It was believed in astrology that errant planets drawing too close to the earth could 'unwit' or turn men mad. Compare

Tillye P389: 'To be planet-struck'; and see 5.2.110–12.

165 *speak* explain.

166 *peevish odds* senseless quarrel.

168 *to i.e.* to be.

172 *stillness* sober behaviour, staidness.

174 *censure* judgement. Compare *Ham.* 1.3.69: 'Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.'

175–6 *That you...opinion* The image here appears to be of Montano 'undoing the strings of his purse of reputation and squandering the high opinion people have of him'.

180 *something...offends* somewhat now hurts.



To execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman  
 Steps in to Cassio and entreats his pause; 210  
 Myself the crying fellow did pursue,  
 Lest by his clamour – as it so fell out –  
 The town might fall in fright. He, swift of foot,  
 Outran my purpose and I returned the rather  
 For that I heard the clink and fall of swords 215  
 And Cassio high in oath, which till tonight  
 I ne'er might say before. When I came back –  
 For this was brief – I found them close together  
 At blow and thrust, even as again they were  
 When you yourself did part them. 220  
 More of this matter can I not report;  
 But men are men; the best sometimes forget.  
 Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,  
 As men in rage strike those that wish them best,  
 Yet surely Cassio, I believe, received 225  
 From him that fled some strange indignity  
 Which patience could not pass.

OTHELLO I know, Iago,  
 Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,  
 Making it light to Cassio. Cassio, I love thee,  
 But never more be officer of mine. 230

*Enter Desdemona attended.*

Look if my gentle love be not raised up!  
 I'll make thee an example.

DESDEMONA What's the matter, dear?

OTHELLO All's well now, sweeting; come away to bed.

Sir, for your hurts myself will be your surgeon.

[*Montano is led off*]

214 the] Q1; then F 216 oath] F; oaths Q1 217 say] F; see Q1 221 can I not] Q1; cannot I F 230 SD *attended*]  
 F; *with others* Q1 232 dear] F; *not in* Q1 233 now] Q1; *not in* F 233–4] *Pope*; All's...sweeting / ...hurts / ...  
 surgeon F, Q1 234 SD] *conj. Malone; Lead him off* F, Q1 (*as part of Othello's speech*)

209 this gentleman i.e. Montano.

210 his pause him to stop.

214 the rather all the sooner.

222 forget i.e. themselves.

223 him i.e. Montano.

227 patience could not pass self-control could not overlook.

228 mince this matter Proverbial (Tilley M755).

234 be your surgeon pay for your medical treatment.

234 SD Both F and Q1 have 'Lead him off' as a part of Othello's speech. Malone was right in seeing this as a stage direction which had crept into the text. As White notes 'off' (= off stage) is a theatrical term and not a word that could be used with any verisimilitude by a character who is supposedly standing on the ramparts of a city.

Iago, look with care about the town, 235  
 And silence those whom this vile brawl distracted.  
 Come, Desdemona, 'tis the soldier's life  
 To have their balmy slumbers waked with strife.

*Exeunt [all but Iago and Cassio]*

IAGO What, are you hurt, lieutenant?

CASSIO Ay, past all surgery. 240

IAGO Marry, God forbid!

CASSIO Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my  
 reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what  
 remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

IAGO As I am an honest man, I thought you had received some bodily 245  
 wound: there is more of sense in that than in reputation.  
 Reputation is an idle and most false imposition, oft got without  
 merit and lost without deserving. You have lost no reputation at  
 all, unless you repute yourself such a loser. What, man! There  
 are ways to recover the general again. You are but now cast 250  
 in his mood, a punishment more in policy than in malice, even  
 so as one would beat his offenceless dog to affright an imperious  
 lion. Sue to him again, and he's yours.

CASSIO I will rather sue to be despised than to deceive so good a  
 commander with so light, so drunken, and so indiscreet an 255  
 officer. Drunk! And speak parrot! And squabble! Swagger!  
 Swear! And discourse fustian with one's own shadow! O thou

238 sd] *Cam. subst.*; *Exit F*; *Exit Moore, Desdemona, and attendants. Q1 (after 239) 241 God*] Q1; *Heauen F*  
 242-4] F; *Reputation...reputation / ...self / ...reputation / ...reputation Q1 242 reputation,* F; *not in Q1*  
 242 O] F; *not in Q1 243 part of*] F; *part sir of Q1 245 I thought*] Q1; *I had thought F 246 of sense*] *conj. Cam.*;  
*sence F*; *offence Q1 250 ways*] Q1; *more wayes F 255 light*] Q1; *slight F 255 so indiscreet*] F; *indiscreete Q1*  
 256-7 *Drunk...shadow*] F; *not in Q1*

246 of sense of physical feeling, of sensibility.  
 Q1's 'offence' (= hurt) makes for a banal sentence;  
 and F's 'sense' (= reason or physical feeling) is vague.  
 Iago's standard for judging all human ideals is the  
 purely physical, and here he is contrasting the  
 reality of physical pain with the imagined existence  
 of the abstraction 'reputation', in much the same  
 way as he has earlier reduced 'love' to a 'carnal  
 sting' (1.3.313-24). I take Q1's reading to be a  
 mis-setting of the manuscript's 'of fence'.

247-9 Reputation...loser Contrast Iago's  
 voicing exactly the opposite view at 3.3.156-62.

247 imposition that which is laid on a person  
 by other people.

248-9 You have...loser Compare 'A man is  
 weal or woe as he thinks himself so' (Tilley M254).

250 recover win back (to your side).

250-1 cast in his mood dismissed in a  
 temporary state of anger.

251 in policy i.e. to demonstrate publicly his  
 control of affairs.

252-3 would beat...lion i.e. would punish an  
 innocent unimportant man in order to deter a  
 powerful and dangerous one. Compare Tilley D443:  
 'Beat the dog before the lion.'

255 light irresponsible. F's 'slight' implies  
 'worthless', which is not the quality Cassio is  
 stressing here.

256 parrot nonsense.

257 fustian bombastic nonsense; such as the  
 'fustian rascal' Pistol speaks in 2H4 2.4.110-200.

invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!

IAGO What was he that you followed with your sword? What had he done to you? 260

CASSIO I know not.

IAGO Is't possible?

CASSIO I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly: a quarrel, but nothing wherefore. O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! That we should with joy, pleasance, revel and applause transform ourselves into beasts! 265

IAGO Why, but you are now well enough. How came you thus recovered?

CASSIO It hath pleased the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath; one unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself. 270

IAGO Come, you are too severe a moraler. As the time, the place, and the condition of this country stands, I could heartily wish this had not befallen; but since it is as it is, mend it for your own good. 275

CASSIO I will ask him for my place again; he shall tell me I am a drunkard. Had I as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange! Every inordinate cup is unblessed, and the ingredience is a devil. 280

IAGO Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature, if it be well used; exclaim no more against it. And, good lieutenant, I think you think I love you.

CASSIO I have well approved it, sir. I drunk!

IAGO You or any man living may be drunk at a time, man. I'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general. I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her 285

265 God] Q1; *not in F* 267 pleasance, revel] F; Reuell, pleasure Q1 272 and] F; *not in Q1* 275 not] F; *not so Q1* 279 O strange] F; *not in Q1* 279 inordinate] F; vnordinate Q1 280 ingredience] Q1; Ingredient F 285 a] F; some Q1 285 man] F; *not in Q1* 285 I'll] Q1; I F 287 hath] F; has Q1 288 denotement] Q2; deuotement F, Q1

267 **applause** 'desire for approval', or perhaps 'celebration of some event'.

273 **moraler** moraliser.

277 **Hydra** The multi-headed serpent in Greek mythology which was killed by Hercules. Whenever one of its heads was cut off, two more grew in its place. Compare Tilley H278.

280 **ingredience** contents.

281 **familiar** friendly; with perhaps a quibble on 'familiar' (= a witch's personal devil).

285 **at a time** sometime.

287 **in...that** in the light of the fact that.

288 **denotement** F's and Q1's 'deuotement' (= adoration) is possible, although it is used nowhere else in Shakespeare's works. However, it seems out of keeping with 'contemplation' and 'mark'. I take the error to be the result of either the compositors' misreading minims in the manuscript or a turned-letter mistake.

parts and graces. Confess yourself freely to her, importune her  
 help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, 290  
 so apt, so blest a disposition, that she holds it a vice in her  
 goodness not to do more than she is requested. This broken  
 joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter; and  
 my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love  
 shall grow stronger than it was before. 295

CASSIO You advise me well.

IAGO I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.

CASSIO I think it freely; and betimes in the morning I will beseech  
 the virtuous Desdemona to undertake for me. I am desperate of  
 my fortunes if they check me here. 300

IAGO You are in the right. Good night, lieutenant, I must to the watch.

CASSIO Good night, honest Iago. *Exit*

IAGO And what's he then that says I play the villain,  
 When this advice is free I give, and honest,  
 Probal to thinking, and indeed the course 305  
 To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy  
 Th'inclining Desdemona to subdue  
 In any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful  
 As the free elements; and then for her  
 To win the Moor, were't to renounce his baptism,  
 All seals and symbols of redeemed sin, 310  
 His soul is so en fettered to her love,  
 That she may make, unmake, do what she list,  
 Even as her appetite shall play the god  
 With his weak function. How am I then a villain 315

290 help] F; shee'll helpe Q1 290 of] F; not in Q1 291 that] Q1; not in F 292-3 broken joint] F; braule Q1  
 298 I will] F; will I Q1 300 here] Q1; not in F 301] F; You...right / ...watch Q1 302 SD] Q1; *Exit Cassio.* F  
 303] Q1; And...then / ...villain F 306] Q1; To...again / ...easy F 310 were't] Q1; were F

289 parts accomplishments, qualities.

290 free generous.

292-5 This broken...before Proverbial: 'A broken bone is the stronger when it is well set' (Tilley B515).

292-3 broken joint Ridley has attempted a defence of Q1's 'Braule' (= conflict) on the grounds that it is typical of Shakespeare's later metaphorical style, but 'splinting a brawl' hardly qualifies as being a metaphor at all.

293 splinter set in splints. Compare *R3* 2.2.118: 'splinter'd, knit, and join'd together'.

294 lay wager.

298 freely unreservedly.

299 undertake take up the matter.

300 check repulse.

304 free Perhaps a quibble on (1) generous, (2) innocent.

305 Probal Probable (or perhaps 'reasonable').

307 inclining compliant.

308 framed as fruitful created as generous.

309 free elements unrestrained natural forces. Compare *Temp.* 5.1.318-19: 'Then to the elements / Be free.'

314 her appetite i.e. his sexual desire for her.

315 weak Because unable to resist.

315 function powers of operation.

To counsel Cassio to this parallel course  
 Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!  
 When devils will the blackest sins put on,  
 They do suggest at first with heavenly shows  
 As I do now. For whiles this honest fool  
 Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,  
 And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,  
 I'll pour this pestilence into his ear:  
 That she repeals him for her body's lust;  
 And by how much she strives to do him good,  
 She shall undo her credit with the Moor.  
 So will I turn her virtue into pitch,  
 And out of her own goodness make the net  
 That shall enmesh them all.

320

325

*Enter Roderigo.*

How now, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I do follow here in the chase, not like a hound that hunts,  
 but one that fills up the cry. My money is almost spent; I have  
 been tonight exceedingly well cudgelled; and I think the issue will  
 be, I shall have so much experience for my pains; and so, with  
 no money at all, and a little more wit, return again to Venice.

330

IAGO How poor are they that have no patience!  
 What wound did ever heal but by degrees?  
 Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,  
 And wit depends on dilatory time.  
 Does't not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee,

335

318 the] F; there Q1 320 whiles] F; while Q1 321 fortunes] Q1; Fortune F 329 enmesh] Q1; en-mash F  
 332 and] F; not in Q1 333 and so, with] F; as that comes to, and Q1 334 a little more] F; with that Q1 334 again]  
 F; not in Q1 339 hath] F; has Q1

316 parallel i.e. to Iago's design.

317 Directly to In complete accord with.

317 Divinity of hell Theology of the Devil.  
 The allusion is to Satan's citation of scripture in the  
 temptation of Christ in Matt. 4.6. Compare Tilley  
 D230.

318-19 When devils...shows Proverbial:  
 'The devil can transform himself into an angel of  
 light' (Tilley D231).

318 put on incite. Compare *MM* 4.2.115-17:  
 'Lord Angelo (belike) thinking me remiss in mine  
 office, awakens me with this unwonted putting-  
 on.'

319 suggest tempt, seduce. Compare *R2*

3.4.75-6: 'What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested  
 thee / To make a second fall.'

321 Plies Solicits.

324 repeals tries to procure Cassio's  
 reinstatement.

327 pitch Three possible layers of meaning: (1)  
 blackness, (2) something odious, (3) that which has  
 the power to ensnare.

331 fills up the cry merely makes one of the  
 pack. Compare *Cor.* 3.3.120: 'You common cry of  
 curs'.

334 wit intelligence.

335 Proverbial: 'He that has no patience has  
 nothing' (Tilley P103).

And thou by that small hurt hath cashiered Cassio. 340  
 Though other things grow fair against the sun,  
 Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe.  
 Content thyself awhile. By th'mass, 'tis morning:  
 Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.  
 Retire thee, go where thou art billeted. 345  
 Away, I say, thou shalt know more hereafter –  
 Nay, get thee gone.

*Exit Roderigo*

Two things are to be done.  
 My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress –  
 I'll set her on.  
 Myself the while to draw the Moor apart, 350  
 And bring him jump when he may Cassio find  
 Soliciting his wife. Ay, that's the way:  
 Dull not device by coldness and delay. *Exit*

3.1 *Enter* CASSIO, MUSICIANS *and* CLOWN.

CASSIO Masters, play here; I will content your pains.  
 Something that's brief, and bid 'Good morrow, general.'  
 [*They play.*]

CLOWN Why, masters, have your instruments been in Naples, that  
 they speak i'th'nose thus?

I MUSICIAN How, sir, how? 5

CLOWN Are these, I pray you, wind instruments?

I MUSICIAN Ay, marry are they, sir.

340 hath] F; hast Q1 342 Yet] F; But Q1 343 By th'mass] Q1; Introth F 347 SD] F; not in Q1 347 Two] Q1;  
 Some Q1 349–50] Q1; one line in F 350 the while] Theobald; a while F, Q1 353 SD] F; Exeunt. Q1 Act 3, Scene 1  
 3.1] Actus Tertius. Scena Prima. F; not in Q1 0 SD MUSICIANS...CLOWN] F; with Musicians and the Clowne Q1  
 2 SD] Q2; not in F, Q1 3 in] F; at Q1 5 SH I MUSICIAN] Mus. F; Boy. Q1 6 you] F; cald Q1

341–2 *Though other...ripe* Although our long-term plans for the seduction of Desdemona are blossoming slowly, yet our preliminary plan against Cassio has already borne fruit.

348 *move plead.*

351 *jump* exactly at the moment. Compare *Ham.* 1.1.65: 'jump at this dead hour'.

353 *device plan, plot.*

353 *coldness* lack of energy.

Act 3, Scene 1

1 It was a custom to wake newlyweds with music on the morning after their first night together.

1 *content your pains* pay for your efforts.

3–4 The Clown may mean that the music has an ugly nasal twang like the Neapolitan accent, but there is probably also a reference to venereal disease, which attacked the nose. Compare *Tro.* 2.3.18–19: 'the Neapolitan bone-ache'; and *MV* 4.1.49, where the bagpipes are said to 'sing i'th'nose'.



CLOWN O, thereby hangs a tail.

I MUSICIAN Whereby hangs a tale, sir?

CLOWN Marry, sir, by many a wind instrument that I know. But, 10  
masters, here's money for you; and the general so likes your music  
that he desires you, for love's sake, to make no more noise with  
it.

I MUSICIAN Well sir, we will not.

CLOWN If you have any music that may not be heard, to't again; but, 15  
as they say, to hear music the general does not greatly care.

I MUSICIAN We have none such, sir.

CLOWN Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I'll away. Go,  
vanish into air, away!

*Exeunt Musicians*

CASSIO Dost thou hear, mine honest friend? 20

CLOWN No, I hear not your honest friend; I hear you.

CASSIO Prithee keep up thy quillets – there's a poor piece of gold for  
thee. If the gentlewoman that attends the general's wife be  
stirring, tell her there's one Cassio entreats her a little favour of  
speech. Wilt thou do this? 25

CLOWN She is stirring, sir; if she will stir hither, I shall seem to notify  
unto her.

CASSIO Do, good my friend.

*Exit Clown*

*Enter IAGO.*

In happy time, Iago.

IAGO You have not been abed then?

CASSIO Why, no; the day had broke before we parted. 30  
I have made bold, Iago,

8 tail] tayle Q1; tale F 9 tale] tale F; tayle Q1 12 for love's sake] F; of all loues Q1 18 up] F; not in Q1  
19 into air] F; not in Q1 19 SD] *Exit Mu. F; not in Q1 20 hear, mine] Theobald; heare my Q1; heare me, mine F*  
23 general's wife] Q1; General F 28 Do...friend.] Q1; not in F 28 SD.1 *Exit Clown] F (after 27); not in Q1*  
31–3] *Capell; I...wife / ...Desdemona F; I...her / ...Desdemona Q1*

8 Proverbial phrase (Tilley T48).

8 tail Slang term for 'penis'.

10 wind instrument i.e. anus.

12 for love's sake for the sake of any affection  
you may have for him; with a pun on 'for the sake  
of his erotic concentration'.

12 noise Pun on (1) music, (2) nose.

15 may not cannot.

16 as they say The point of this phrase is not  
clear, as one would expect it to introduce some kind  
of popular saying about the 'general' (= common  
public) not liking music very much; but none is  
known.

18 Then...bag Proverbial phrase (Tilley  
P345); with a possible sexual joke.

18 I'll away This is either a misprint for 'You'll  
away', or is a phrase or title of an old song now lost.

22 quillets verbal quibbles. Compare *1H6*  
2.4.17: 'these nice sharp quillets of the law'.

26 seem arrange. Compare *MND* 3.1.17–18:  
'let the prologue seem to say'.

28 In happy time You are come at an  
opportune moment.

To send in to your wife. My suit to her  
Is that she will to virtuous Desdemona  
Procure me some access.

IAGO I'll send her to you presently;  
And I'll devise a mean to draw the Moor 35  
Out of the way, that your converse and business  
May be more free.

CASSIO I humbly thank you for't.  
*Exit [Iago]*  
I never knew a Florentine more kind and honest.

*Enter EMILIA.*

EMILIA Good morrow, good lieutenant; I am sorry  
For your displeasure; but all will sure be well. 40  
The general and his wife are talking of it,  
And she speaks for you stoutly. The Moor replies  
That he you hurt is of great fame in Cyprus  
And great affinity, and that in wholesome wisdom  
He might not but refuse you; but he protests he loves you, 45  
And needs no other suitor but his likings  
To take the safest occasion by the front  
To bring you in again.

CASSIO Yet I beseech you,  
If you think fit, or that it may be done,  
Give me advantage of some brief discourse 50  
With Desdemon alone.

EMILIA Pray you, come in;  
I will bestow you where you shall have time  
To speak your bosom freely.

CASSIO I am much bound to you.

*Exeunt*

37-8 I...honest] *Capell*; I...knew / ...honest F, Q1 37 SD] F, Q1 (*after free*) 40 sure] F; sooner Q1 47] Q1; *not in F* 53 CASSIO...you.] F; *not in Q1* 53 SD] Q1; *not in F*

38 a Florentine i.e. even one of my own countrymen; see 1.1.20.

40 displeasure being out of favour. Compare *H8* 3.2.392: 'your displeasure with the King' (about Wolsey's disgrace).

44 great affinity related to important people.

44 wholesome prudent.

47 To take...front Compare 'Take occasion by the forelock' (Tilley T311).

47 occasion opportunity.

47 front forehead.

53 bosom private thoughts and feelings. Compare *H8* 1.1.112-13: 'Bosom up my counsel. / You'll find it wholesome.'

3.2 *Enter* OTHELLO, IAGO *and* GENTLEMEN.

OTHELLO These letters give, Iago, to the pilot,  
 And by him do my duties to the senate.  
 That done, I will be walking on the works;  
 Repair there to me.

IAGO Well, my good lord, I'll do't. [Exit]

OTHELLO This fortification, gentlemen, shall we see't?

GENTLEMEN We'll wait upon your lordship.

*Exeunt*

3.3 *Enter* DESDEMONA, CASSIO *and* EMILIA.

DESDEMONA Be thou assured, good Cassio, I will do  
 All my abilities in thy behalf.

EMILIA Good madam, do; I warrant it grieves my husband  
 As if the case were his.

DESDEMONA O, that's an honest fellow. Do not doubt, Cassio,  
 But I will have my lord and you again  
 As friendly as you were.

CASSIO Bounteous madam,  
 Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio,  
 He's never anything but your true servant.

DESDEMONA I know't; I thank you. You do love my lord,  
 You have known him long, and be you well assured  
 He shall in strangeness stand no farther off  
 Than in a politic distance.

CASSIO Ay, but, lady,  
 That policy may either last so long  
 Or feed upon such nice and waterish diet,  
 Or breed itself so out of circumstance,

Act 3, Scene 2 3.2] *Scena Secunda*. F; not in Q1 0 SD and] F; and other Q1 2 senate] F; State Q1 4 SD] Walker; not in F, Q1 6 We'll] Well F; We Q1 Act 3, Scene 3 3.3] *Scena Tertia*. F; not in Q1 3] Q1; Good...do / ... husband F 3 warrant] F; know Q1 4 case] Q1; cause F 10 I know't] F; O sir Q1 12 strangeness] F; strangest Q1 14 That] F; The Q1 16 circumstance] Q1; Circumstances F

## Act 3, Scene 2

- 2 do my duties pay my respects.
- 3 works fortifications.
- 4 Repair Return.
- 6 wait upon attend.

## Act 3, Scene 3

- 12 strangeness estrangement.
- 13 in a politic distance is expedient politically.
- 15 nice thin, sparse.
- 16 Either 'Or reproduce so few opportunities for my reinstatement', or 'engender excuses for my non-recall out of chance occurrences'.

That I being absent and my place supplied,  
My general will forget my love and service.

DESDEMONA Do not doubt that. Before Emilia here,  
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee 20  
If I do vow a friendship, I'll perform it  
To the last article. My lord shall never rest,  
I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience;  
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;  
I'll intermingle every thing he does 25  
With Cassio's suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio;  
Thy solicitor shall rather die  
Than give thy cause away.

*Enter OTHELLO and IAGO.*

EMILIA Madam, here comes my lord.  
CASSIO Madam, I'll take my leave. 30  
DESDEMONA Why, stay and hear me speak.  
CASSIO Madam, not now: I am very ill at ease,  
Unfit for mine own purposes.  
DESDEMONA Well, do your discretion.

*Exit Cassio*

IAGO Ha! I like not that.  
OTHELLO What dost thou say? 35  
IAGO Nothing, my lord; or if – I know not what.  
OTHELLO Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?  
IAGO Cassio, my lord? No, sure I cannot think it  
That he would steal away so guilty-like,  
Seeing you coming.  
OTHELLO I do believe 'twas he. 40

28 thy cause] F; thee cause: Q1 28 SD and IAGO] F; Iago, and Gentlemen Q1 33 purposes] F; purpose Q1  
39 steal] F; sneak Q1 40 you] Q1; your F

17–18 That I being . . . service Compare Tilley F596: 'Long absent soon forgotten'.

17 supplied filled (by someone else). Compare *1H4* 3.2.32–3: 'Thy place in Council thou hast rudely lost, / Which by thy younger brother is supplied.'

19 doubt fear. Compare *Wiv.* 1.4.41–2: 'I doubt he be not well, that he comes not home.'

20 warrant guarantee.

22 article A legal term meaning 'clause in a contract'.

23 watch him tame prevent him from sleeping

until he is tractable. This was one of the means by which young hawks were trained in falconry. Compare *Tro.* 3.2.43–4: 'You must be watch'd ere you be made tame'; also *Shr.* 4.1.195.

24 board a shrift table (shall seem) a confessional. With the idea that Othello shall do penance.

27 Thy solicitor Your advocate. Compare *LLL* 2.1.28–9: 'we single you / As our best-moving fair solicitor'.

28 give thy cause away abandon your case.

34 do your discretion do what you think is discreet.

DESDEMONA How now, my lord?

I have been talking with a suitor here,  
A man that languishes in your displeasure.

OTHELLO Who is't you mean?

DESDEMONA Why, your lieutenant, Cassio. Good my lord,

If I have any grace or power to move you,  
His present reconciliation take.

For if he be not one that truly loves you,  
That errs in ignorance, and not in cunning,  
I have no judgement in an honest face.

I prithee call him back.

OTHELLO Went he hence now?

DESDEMONA Ay, sooth; so humbled

That he hath left part of his grief with me  
To suffer with him. Good love, call him back.

OTHELLO Not now, sweet Desdemon; some other time.

DESDEMONA But shall't be shortly?

OTHELLO The sooner, sweet, for you.

DESDEMONA Shall't be tonight at supper?

OTHELLO No, not tonight.

DESDEMONA Tomorrow dinner then?

OTHELLO I shall not dine at home.

I meet the captains at the citadel.

DESDEMONA Why, then, tomorrow night, or Tuesday morn,

On Tuesday noon, or night; on Wednesday morn.

I prithee name the time, but let it not

Exceed three days. In faith, he's penitent;

And yet his trespass, in our common reason –

Save that, they say, the wars must make example

Out of their best – is not almost a fault

T'incur a private check. When shall he come?

52 Ay, sooth;] F; Yes faith, Q1 53 hath] F; has Q1 53 grief] F; grieves Q1 54 To] F; I Q1 60 or] Q1; on F  
61 noon] F; morne Q1 61 on] F; or Q1 65 example] F; examples Q1 66 their] Rowe; her F, Q1

46 grace favour in your eyes.

47 present...take restore him immediately to favour. Onions suggests 'submission with a view to being restored to favour', but if this is the meaning then 'present' does not make much sense in the context.

49 in cunning knowingly, with complete mental awareness.

58 dinner i.e. the modern 'luncheon'.

64–7 yet his trespass...check Compare Cinthio's source story: 'He has not committed so serious an offence as to deserve such hostility' (Bullough VII, 245).

66 best i.e. the highest-ranking officers.

66 not almost hardly, barely. Compare *Err.* 5.1.181: 'I have not breath'd almost since I did see it.'

67 check reprimand.

Tell me, Othello. I wonder in my soul  
 What you would ask me that I should deny,  
 Or stand so mammering on. What! Michael Cassio,  
 That came a-wooing with you, and so many a time  
 When I have spoke of you dispraisingly  
 Hath tane your part, to have so much to do  
 To bring him in? By'r Lady, I could do much –

70

OTHELLO Prithee no more. Let him come when he will;  
 I will deny thee nothing.

75

DESDEMONA Why, this is not a boon;  
 'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,  
 Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,  
 Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit  
 To your own person. Nay, when I have a suit  
 Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,  
 It shall be full of poise and difficult weight,  
 And fearful to be granted.

80

OTHELLO I will deny thee nothing.  
 Whereon, I do beseech thee, grant me this,  
 To leave me but a little to myself.

85

DESDEMONA Shall I deny you? No; farewell, my lord.

OTHELLO Farewell, my Desdemona, I'll come to thee straight.

DESDEMONA Emilia, come. Be as your fancies teach you;  
 Whate'er you be, I am obedient.

*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia*

OTHELLO Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul  
 But I do love thee; and when I love thee not,  
 Chaos is come again.

90

IAGO My noble lord –

69 would] F; could Q1 70 mammering] F; muttering Q1 74 By'r Lady] Q1; Trust me F 82 difficult weight] F;  
 difficulty Q1 88 Be as] F; be it as Q1 89 sd] *Exit* Desd. and Em. Q1; *Exit*. F

70 mammering on hesitating.

70–3 What...part See above, pp. 15–16.

74 in i.e. into favour.

79–80 a peculiar...person something of special  
 personal advantage to yourself.

81 touch test, make trial of.

82 poise weight, importance. Compare *Lear*  
 2.1.120: 'Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some  
 poise' (Q1 text).

82 difficult weight momentous, hard to decide  
 on.

84 Whereon In return for which.

87 straight at once.

88 fancies inclinations.

90 wretch A term of endearment (as in *Rom.*  
 1.3.44).

91 But I do If I do not.

91–2 when I...again The allusion is to the  
 classical legend that Love was the first of the gods  
 to spring out of original chaos. Compare Ben  
 Jonson's *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*, 26–7:  
 'Love. Cruel Sphinx...without me / All again  
 would Chaos be'; and *The Masque of Beauty*, 282–5,  
 326–8.

91 when I love thee not if ever I were not to  
 love you.

OTHELLO What dost thou say, Iago?

IAGO Did Michael Cassio,  
When you wooed my lady, know of your love?

OTHELLO He did from first to last. Why dost thou ask?

IAGO But for a satisfaction of my thought;  
No further harm.

OTHELLO Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

OTHELLO O yes, and went between us very oft.

IAGO Indeed?

OTHELLO Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?  
Is he not honest?

IAGO Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO Honest? Ay, honest.

IAGO My lord, for aught I know.

OTHELLO What dost thou think?

IAGO Think, my lord?

OTHELLO Think, my lord! By heaven, he echoes me,  
As if there were some monster in his thought  
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something.  
I heard thee say even now thou lik'st not that,  
When Cassio left my wife. What didst not like?  
And when I told thee he was of my counsel  
In my whole course of wooing, thou cried'st 'Indeed?'  
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,  
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain  
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,  
Show me thy thought.

IAGO My lord, you know I love you.

OTHELLO I think thou dost;  
And for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,  
And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,  
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more;

93-4 Did...love?] F; Did...lady / ...love Q1 94 you] Q1; he F 95] Q1; He...last / ...ask F 96 thought] F; thoughts Q1 99 oft] F; often Q1 101 Ay] F; not in Q1 107 By heaven, he echoes] Q1; Alas, thou ecchos't F 108 his] Q1; thy F 109 dost] F; didst Q1 110 even] F; but Q1 113 In] Q1; Of F 116 conceit] F; counsell Q1 121 fright] F; affright Q1

108 monster Compare 167-9 below.

114 purse knit, draw together.

116 conceit idea, conception. Compare R3

3.4.49-50: 'There's some conceit or other likes him well, / When that he bids good morrow with such spirit.'

118 you know I love you A diabolic echo of Peter's words to the risen Christ in John 21.15: 'Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.'

121 stops breakings off, sudden pauses.

For such things in a false disloyal knave  
 Are tricks of custom; but in a man that's just,  
 They're close dilations, working from the heart,  
 That passion cannot rule.

IAGO For Michael Cassio, 125  
 I dare be sworn I think that he is honest.

OTHELLO I think so too.

IAGO Men should be what they seem;  
 Or those that be not, would they might seem none!

OTHELLO Certain, men should be what they seem.

IAGO Why then, I think Cassio's an honest man. 130

OTHELLO Nay, yet there's more in this.

I prithee speak to me as to thy thinkings,  
 As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts  
 The worst of words.

IAGO Good my lord, pardon me;  
 Though I am bound to every act of duty, 135  
 I am not bound to that all slaves are free to.

Utter my thoughts! Why, say they are vile and false?  
 As where's that palace, whereinto foul things  
 Sometimes intrude not? Who has a breast so pure,  
 But some uncleanly apprehensions 140  
 Keep leets and law-days, and in session sit  
 With meditations lawful?

OTHELLO Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,

124 dilations] F; denotements Q1; delations conj. Johnson, Steevens 126 be sworn] F; presume Q1 127 what] F; that Q1 132 as] F; not in Q1 133 thy] F; the Q1 133 thoughts] F; thought Q1 134 words] F; word Q1 136 that] Q1; that: F 136 free to] Q1; free F 139 a] Q1; that F 140 But some] Q1; Wherein F 141 session] Q1; Sessions F

123 of custom customary.

124 close dilations There is no agreement among editors about the exact meaning of this phrase. The two most favoured interpretations of this F reading are: (1) involuntary delays; and (2) half-hidden expressions. If one adopts Q1's 'denotements', the meaning becomes 'indications of something shut up and secret'. For a full discussion of possible emendations, see supplementary note.

125 That passion cannot rule Either (1) that cannot control its passions; or (2) that cannot be controlled by emotion. See supplementary note.

127-8 Men should... none Compare 'Be what thou would seem to be' (Tilley S214).

128 none Either (1) not to be men; or (2) not seem to be honest men.

136 that all slaves are free to i.e. the right that even slaves have to think what they wish. Compare 'Thought is free' (Tilley T244).

140 apprehensions ideas. As in *Tim.* 1.1.208: 'a lascivious apprehension'.

141 leets Courts of record, which some lords of the manor were empowered to hold yearly or half-yearly in their localities; hence 'days on which such courts were held'.

143 conspire This was used to describe actions by a single person as well as by a group; compare *Sonnets* 10.6: 'That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire'.



If thou but think'st him wronged, and mak'st his ear  
A stranger to thy thoughts.

IAGO

I do beseech you,

145

Though I perchance am vicious in my guess –  
As I confess it is my nature's plague  
To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy  
Shapes faults that are not – that your wisdom then,  
From one that so imperfectly conceits,  
Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble  
Out of his scattering and unsure observance.  
It were not for your quiet, nor your good,  
Nor for my manhood, honesty, and wisdom,  
To let you know my thoughts.

150

OTHELLO

What dost thou mean?

155

IAGO

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,

Is the immediate jewel of their souls.

Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something,  
nothing,

'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands:

But he that filches from me my good name

Robs me of that which not enriches him

And makes me poor indeed.

160

OTHELLO By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts.

IAGO You cannot, if my heart were in your hand,

Nor shall not, while 'tis in my custody.

165

OTHELLO Ha!

IAGO O beware, my lord, of jealousy:

148 oft] Q1; of F 149 that your wisdom] F; I intreat you Q1 149 then] Q1; not in F 150 conceits] F; coniects Q1 151 Would] F; You'd Q1 152 his] F; my Q1 154 and] F; or Q1 155 What...mean?] F; Zouns. Q1 156 woman, dear] woman (deere F; woman's deere Q1 157 their] F; our Q1 158] Q1; Who...trash / ...nothing F 163 By heaven] Q1; not in F 163 thoughts] F; thought Q1 166 OTHELLO Ha!] F; not in Q1 167 my lord, of] F; not in Q1

148 jealousy suspicious vigilance. Compare *TN* 3.3.8–9: 'But jealousy what might befall your travel, / Being skillless in these parts'.

150 conceits imagines, conjectures. Q1's 'coniects' is possible, as the two words could easily be confused in the Secretary hand.

152 scattering random.

156–62 Good name...indeed Hunter compares Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric* (1553): 'a slanderer is worse than any thief, because a good name is better than all the goods in the world... and a thief may restore that again which he hath taken

away, but a slanderer cannot give a man his good name which he hath taken from him'. Compare also 'A good name is better than riches' (*Tilley N22*); and contrast Iago's lines giving the opposite view at 2.3.247–9.

157 immediate directly touching, most important.

158 trash A scornful term for money; compare *JC* 4.3.72–4: 'I had rather coin my heart... than to wring / From the hard hands of peasants their vile trash.'

It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
 The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss  
 Who certain of his fate loves not his wronger; 170  
 But O, what damnèd minutes tells he o'er  
 Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet fondly loves?

OTHELLO O misery!

IAGO Poor and content is rich, and rich enough;  
 But riches fineless is as poor as winter 175  
 To him that ever fears he shall be poor.  
 Good God, the souls of all my tribe defend  
 From jealousy.

OTHELLO Why, why is this?  
 Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,  
 To follow still the changes of the moon 180  
 With fresh suspicions? No, to be once in doubt  
 Is once to be resolved. Exchange me for a goat  
 When I shall turn the business of my soul  
 To such exsufflicate and blown surmises  
 Matching thy inference. 'Tis not to make me jealous 185  
 To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,  
 Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well:  
 Where virtue is, these are more virtuous.

168 mock] F, Q1; make conj. Theobald, Hanmer 169 The] F; That Q1 172 fondly] Knight; soundly F; strongly Q1  
 177 God] Q1; Heauen F 182 once] Q1; not in F 184 blown] Q1; blow'd F 187 well] Q1; not in F

168-9 mock...feeds on i.e. torments its victim, the jealous man himself. See supplementary note.

170 his wronger the wife betraying him.

171 tells counts.

172 fondly foolishly. Knight's emendation of F's 'soundly' and Q1's 'strongly' is demanded by the preceding pairing 'dotes/doubts'.

174 Proverbial: 'The greatest wealth is contentment with a little' (Tilley W194).

175 fineless boundless, endless. Compare *Ham.* 5.1.106: 'Is this the fine [= end] of his fines?'

180-1 follow still...suspicions be ever drawn into new suspicions with each waxing and waning of the moon (as a madman is).

182 once once and for all.

182 resolved convinced, free from all doubt.

182 goat A type of animal lust.

183-5 When I...inference The moment I bring my mind to concentrate on such inflated and rumoured suspicions as you describe.

184 exsufflicate This is the only occurrence of

this word in the language and presumably means 'puffed up, inflated', although some editors take it to mean 'spat out'.

184 blown Usually taken in one of two senses: (1) flyblown (as in *WT* 4.4.791); (2) swollen, inflated (as in *Lear* 4.4.27). However, the meaning is surely 'bandied about, rumoured' as in *2H4* Induction 15-16, where it is used in conjunction with precisely the same vocabulary as Othello is using here: 'Rumour is a pipe / Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures.'

185 inference Onions and editors gloss this as 'allegation', but Othello is surely referring to the cuckold's state of mind as it is described by Iago, and therefore means 'demonstration, depiction', in the sense of 'infer' in *John* 3.1.213.

185-8 'Tis not to make...virtuous The introduction to Cinthio's source story comments on women who 'with beauty of body and under a semblance of virtue, for instance in singing, playing, dancing lightly and speaking sweetly, hide an ugly and abominable soul' (Bullough, VII, 240).

Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw  
 The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt, 190  
 For she had eyes and chose me. No, Iago,  
 I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;  
 And on the proof, there is no more but this:  
 Away at once with love or jealousy!

IAGO I am glad of this; for now I shall have reason 195  
 To show the love and duty that I bear you  
 With franker spirit. Therefore, as I am bound,  
 Receive it from me. I speak not yet of proof.  
 Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio;  
 Wear your eyes thus: not jealous, nor secure. 200  
 I would not have your free and noble nature,  
 Out of self-bounty, be abused. Look to't.  
 I know our country disposition well:  
 In Venice they do let God see the pranks  
 They dare not show their husbands. Their best  
 conscience 205  
 Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

OTHELLO Dost thou say so?

IAGO She did deceive her father, marrying you;  
 And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks  
 She loved them most.

OTHELLO And so she did.

IAGO Why, go to then! 210  
 She that so young could give out such a seeming  
 To seel her father's eyes up close as oak  
 He thought 'twas witchcraft – but I am much to blame,

195 this] F; it Q1 200 eyes] F; eie Q1 204 God] Q1; Heauen F 205] Q1; They...husbands / ...conscience F  
 205 not] F; not in Q1 206 leave't] F; leauc Q1 206 keep't] kept F; keepe Q1 213] Q1; He...witchcraft / ...blame F

189 weak merits i.e. lack of attractive (physical) qualities.

190 doubt suspicion.

190 revolt unfaithfulness (or revulsion leading to it). Compare *TN* 2.4.97–9: 'their love may be call'd appetite... / That suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt'.

200 secure free from suspicion. Compare *Wiv.* 2.1.233–4: 'Though Page be a secure fool, and stands so firmly on his wife's frailty'.

202 self-bounty innate generosity. Compare

*Tim.* 2.2.232–3: 'That thought is bounty's foe; / Being free itself, it thinks all others so.'

204–6 In Venice...unknown Proverbial: 'Live charily if not chastely' (Tilley L381).

205 best conscience highest idea of morality.

208 Iago echoes Brabantio's lines at 1.3.288–9.

210 go to there you are (colloquial).

212 seel See 1.3.265 n.

212 close as oak A proverbial saying (Tilley O1), presumably referring to the close grain of the wood.

I humbly do beseech you of your pardon  
For too much loving you.

OTHELLO I am bound to thee for ever. 215

IAGO I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.

OTHELLO Not a jot, not a jot.

IAGO I'faith, I fear it has.

I hope you will consider what is spoke  
Comes from my love. But I do see you're moved.

I am to pray you not to strain my speech 220

To grosser issues nor to larger reach

Than to suspicion.

OTHELLO I will not.

IAGO Should you do so, my lord,

My speech should fall into such vile success

As my thoughts aimed not at. Cassio's my worthy  
friend –

225

My lord, I see you're moved.

OTHELLO No, not much moved.

I do not think but Desdemona's honest.

IAGO Long live she so, and long live you to think so!

OTHELLO And yet how nature erring from itself –

IAGO Ay, there's the point: as, to be bold with you, 230

Not to affect many proposèd matches

Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,

Whereto we see in all things nature tends –

Foh! one may smell, in such, a will most rank,

Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.

235

But pardon me: I do not in position

Distinctly speak of her; though I may fear

217 I' faith] Q1; Trust me F 219] Q1; Comes...love / ...moved F 219 my] Q1; your F 225] Q1; Which...not / ...friend F 225 As] Q1; Which F 225 aimed] F; aime Q1 225 at] Q1; not in F 225 worthy] F; trusty Q1 228] Q1; Long...so / ...so F 230] Q1; Ay...point / ...you F 234 Foh! one] F; Fie we Q1 235 disproportion] Q1; disproportions F

215 bound indebted.

220 strain enlarge the meaning of.

221 grosser issues A quibble: (1) more substantial conclusions; (2) more lewd conclusions. Compare *Ham.* 4.7.169–70: 'long purples / That liberal shepherds give a grosser name'.

221 larger A quibble: (1) wider; (2) more licentious; as in *Ado* 4.1.52: 'I never tempted her with word too large.'

224 success result (as in *Tro.* 2.2.117).

227 honest chaste, virtuous.

231–3 Not to affect...tends Iago is again echoing Brabantio at 1.3.96–7.

231 affect look favourably on, like. Compare *TN* 2.5.23–4: 'Maria once told me she did affect me.'

234 will A quibble: (1) sexual desire; (2) purpose.

234 rank A quibble: (1) corrupt; (2) lascivious.

236–7 in position Distinctly in applying a deliberate proposition specifically.

Her will, recoiling to her better judgement,  
 May fall to match you with her country forms,  
 And happily repent.

OTHELLO Farewell, farewell. 240

If more thou dost perceive, let me know more;  
 Set on thy wife to observe. Leave me, Iago.

IAGO [*Going.*] My lord, I take my leave.

OTHELLO Why did I marry? This honest creature doubtless  
 Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds. 245

IAGO [*Returning.*] My lord, I would I might entreat your honour  
 To scan this thing no farther. Leave it to time.  
 Although 'tis fit that Cassio have his place –  
 For sure he fills it up with great ability –  
 Yet if you please to hold him off awhile, 250  
 You shall by that perceive him and his means.

Note if your lady strain his entertainment  
 With any strong or vehement importunity –  
 Much will be seen in that. In the mean time,  
 Let me be thought too busy in my fears – 255

As worthy cause I have to fear I am –  
 And hold her free, I do beseech your honour.

OTHELLO Fear not my government.

IAGO I once more take my leave. *Exit*

OTHELLO This fellow's of exceeding honesty 260  
 And knows all qualities, with a learnèd spirit,  
 Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,  
 Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,

240–2] *Rowe*; Farewell, farewell / ...more / ...observe / ...Iago F; Farewell, if more / ...on / ...Iago Q1  
 240 farewell] F; not in Q1 243 SD] *Rowe*; not in F, Q1 244] Q1; Why...marry / ...doubtless F 246 SH IAGO] F;  
 not in Q1 246 SD] *Capell*; not in F, Q1 248 Although 'tis] F; Tho it be Q1 250 hold] Q1; not in F 252 his] F;  
 her Q1 259 SD] F, Q1; not in some copies of Q1 261 qualities] Q1; Quantities F 262 dealings] F; dealing Q1

239 *May fall...forms* May begin to compare you with the style of good looks typical of her own countrymen.

240 *happily haply*, perhaps. As in *Shr.* 4.4.54 and *2H6* 3.1.306.

247 *scan* scrutinise.

251 *his means* the methods he uses (to recover his position).

252 *strain his entertainment* urge that he be received again into employment. Compare *Cor.* 4.3.43–5: 'the centurions and their charges, distinctly billeted, already i'th'entertainment'.

255 *busy interfering*. Compare *Ham.* 3.4.31–3:

'Thou wretched, rash intruding fool... / Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.'

257 *free innocent*.

258 *my government* my control over my behaviour. As in *1H4* 3.1.182.

261 *qualities* natures, characters of people.

262 *Of* In regard to.

262 *haggard* intractable, wild (as an untrained hawk). Compare *TN* 3.1.64–5: 'like the haggard, check at every feather / That comes before his eye'.

263 *jesses* 'Narrow strips of soft leather, silk or other material, fastened round the legs of a trained hawk, with silver rings through which passed the line that held it to the falconer's wrist' (NS).

I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind  
 To prey at fortune. Haply for I am black, 265  
 And have not those soft parts of conversation  
 That chamberers have, or for I am declined  
 Into the vale of years – yet that's not much –  
 She's gone, I am abused, and my relief  
 Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage, 270  
 That we can call these delicate creatures ours  
 And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad  
 And live upon the vapour of a dungeon  
 Than keep a corner in the thing I love  
 For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague of great ones, 275  
 Prerogativèd are they less than the base;  
 'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:  
 Even then this forkèd plague is fated to us  
 When we do quicken. Look where she comes.

*Enter Desdemona and Emilia.*

If she be false, O then heaven mocks itself; 280  
 I'll not believe it.

DESDEMONA                   How now, my dear Othello?  
 Your dinner and the generous islanders,  
 By you invited, do attend your presence.

OTHELLO I am to blame.

DESDEMONA                   Why do you speak so faintly?

265 Haply] F; Happily Q1 268 vale] F; valt Q1 273 of] F; in Q1 274 keep] F, Q1; leepe Q1 (some copies)  
 274 the] F; a Q1 275 of] Q1; to F 279 Look where she] F; Desdemona Q1 279 SD] F; after 281 in Q1 280 O  
 then heaven mocks] Q1; Heauen mock'd F 282 islanders] F; Ilander Q1 284–5 Why...well] F; one line in Q1  
 284 do...faintly] F; is your speech so faint Q1

264 whistle her off A term used to describe the setting free of an untrainable hawk.

264 let...wind The way a hawk was released in order to lose it. Compare 'To go down the wind [= to ruin]' (Tilley w432).

265 prey at fortune fend for herself, hunt at random.

265 Haply for Perhaps because.

266 soft...conversation pleasant arts of social behaviour.

267 chamberers frequenters of ladies' chambers, courtly gallants; with the overtone of 'seducers' as in 'chambering' (OED sv *vbl sb* 2).

269 abused deceived, disgraced.

276 Most editors take this to mean that 'important people are less free from this curse than

men of low birth'; but I think there is also included the idea that 'the peccadilloes of the great are more likely to be widely known than those of their social inferiors'.

277 'Tis...unshunnable Compare 'Marriage is destiny' (Tilley M682), and 'Cuckolds come by destiny' (Tilley C889).

278 forkèd plague The curse of the cuckold's horns.

279 do quicken are conceived, are born. Compare MM 5.1.495.

280 heaven mocks itself i.e. by creating something which only appears so perfect.

282 generous noble. As in MM 4.6.13.

283 attend wait.

Are you not well?

285

OTHELLO I have a pain upon my forehead here.

DESDEMONA Faith, that's with watching; 'twill away again.

Let me but bind it hard, within this hour

It will be well.

OTHELLO Your napkin is too little.

[*He puts the handkerchief from him, and she drops it.*]

Let it alone. Come, I'll go in with you.

290

DESDEMONA I am very sorry that you are not well.

*Exeunt Othello and Desdemona*

EMILIA I am glad I have found this napkin:

This was her first remembrance from the Moor.

My wayward husband hath a hundred times

Wooded me to steal it; but she so loves the token,

295

For he conjured her she should ever keep it,

That she reserves it evermore about her

To kiss and talk to. I'll have the work tane out

And give't Iago.

What he will do with it, heaven knows, not I:

300

I nothing but to please his fantasy.

*Enter Iago.*

IAGO How now? What do you here alone?

EMILIA Do not you chide; I have a thing for you.

IAGO You have a thing for me? It is a common thing –

EMILIA Ha!

305

IAGO To have a foolish wife.

EMILIA O, is that all? What will you give me now

For that same handkerchief?

287 Faith] Q1; Why F 288 it hard] F; your head Q1 289 well] F; well againe Q1 289 SD] *Capell subst.; not in F, Q1 291 SD] Ex. Oth. and Desd. Q1 (after 292); Exit. F (after 290) 299–300] Johnson; And...it / ...not I F, Q1 301 but to please] F; know, but for Q1 301 SD] F; after 300 in Q1 304] Q1; You...me / ...thing F 304 You have] F; not in Q1 306 wife] F; thing Q1*

286 upon my forehead i.e. where his cuckold's horns grow.

287 watching lack of sleep. Compare 3.3.23 and n.

292 napkin handkerchief.

294–5 See the discussion of the play's time-scheme, pp. 14–17 above.

294 wayward capricious, unaccountable.

296 conjured her made her swear, solemnly commanded her.

298 work tane out embroidery copied.

301 his fantasy some capricious idea he has.

304 thing female sexual organ (as in *1H4* 3.3.117).

304 common open to everyone.

305 Ha! Emilia obviously thinks Iago is going to raise the subject of her supposed infidelity which, we learn from 4.2.144–6, has been a subject of quarrel between them in the past.

- IAGO What handkerchief?  
 EMILIA What handkerchief!  
 Why, that the Moor first gave to Desdemona, 310  
 That which so often you did bid me steal.  
 IAGO Hast stolen it from her?  
 EMILIA No, faith; she let it drop by negligence,  
 And to th'advantage I being here took't up.  
 Look, here it is.  
 IAGO A good wench! Give it me. 315  
 EMILIA What will you do with't, that you have been so earnest  
 To have me filch it?  
 IAGO [*Snatching it.*] Why, what's that to you?  
 EMILIA If it be not for some purpose of import,  
 Give't me again. Poor lady, she'll run mad  
 When she shall lack it.  
 IAGO Be not acknown on't: 320  
 I have use for it. Go, leave me.

*Exit Emilia*

I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin  
 And let him find it. Trifles light as air  
 Are to the jealous confirmations strong  
 As proofs of holy writ. This may do something. 325  
 The Moor already changes with my poison:  
 Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,  
 Which at the first are scarce found to distaste  
 But, with a little act upon the blood,  
 Burn like the mines of sulphur. I did say so. 330

312 stolen] stolne F; stole Q1 313 No, faith;] No faith, Q1; No; but F 316-17 What...it] *Theobald*; What...been /  
 ...it F, Q1 317 SD] *Rowe*; not in F, Q1 319 Give 't me] F; Giue mee 't Q1 320-1 Be...me] F; one line in Q1  
 320 acknown] F; you knowne Q1 326] F; not in Q1 329 act] F; art, Q1 330 mines] F; mindes Q1 330 SD] F;  
 after 329 in Q1

314 to th'advantage opportunely, fortunately.  
 318 import importance.

320 lack miss.

320 Be not acknown on Do not admit to any  
 knowledge of, feign ignorance about.

322 I will...napkin Compare Cinthio's source  
 story: 'The wicked Ensign, seizing a suitable  
 opportunity, went to the Corporal's room, and with  
 cunning malice left the handkerchief at the head of  
 his bed' (Bullough, VII, 247).

327 conceits conceptions, ideas.

328 distaste be distasteful.

329 act action. Some editors unnecessarily place  
 a comma after 'little', interpreting it: 'but, after a  
 short time, act upon the blood'.

330 mines of sulphur These were popularly  
 associated with the Aeolian Islands and Sicily.  
 Compare Pliny, 35: 'Sulphur...is engendered  
 within the Islands Aeolia, which lie between Italy  
 and Sicily...which do always burn by reason  
 thereof.'



*Enter Othello.*

Look where he comes! Not poppy nor mandragora,  
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,  
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep  
Which thou owed'st yesterday.

OTHELLO Ha, ha, false to me!

IAGO Why, how now, general! No more of that. 335

OTHELLO Avaunt, be gone! Thou hast set me on the rack.  
I swear 'tis better to be much abused  
Than but to know't a little.

IAGO How now, my lord!

OTHELLO What sense had I of her stolen hours of lust?  
I saw't not, thought it not, it harmed not me. 340  
I slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry;  
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips.  
He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen,  
Let him not know't and he's not robbed at all.

IAGO I am sorry to hear this. 345

OTHELLO I had been happy if the general camp,  
Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet body  
So I had nothing known. O, now for ever  
Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!  
Farewell the plumèd troops, and the big wars 350  
That makes ambition virtue – O farewell!  
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,  
The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear-piercing fife,  
The royal banner, and all quality,  
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war! 355

334 me!] F; me, to me? Q1 338 know 't] F; know Q1 339 of] Q1; in F 341 fed well] F; not in Q1 350 troops] F; troop Q1

331 poppy opium.

331 mandragora The mandrake plant, yielding a soporific drug; compare *Ant.* 1.5.4–5: 'Give me to drink mandragora... / That I might sleep out this great gap of time'; also Tilley J101.

334 owed'st possessed.

339 sense awareness.

341 free untroubled.

343–4 Proverbial: 'He that is not sensible of his loss has lost nothing' (Tilley L461).

343 wanting missing.

347 Pioners i.e. pioneers; considered at this time the lowest type of soldier. Fighting men were

sometimes disciplined by being sentenced to serve as pioneers. Hart quotes Davies, *Art of War* (1619), on the subject of a soldier who, on being convicted of losing his weapons, is sentenced to be 'dismissed with punishment or to be made some abject pioner'.

348 So If only.

350–1 the big... virtue Compare G. Chapman, *Revenge for Honour* (ed. T. M. Parrott) 1.1.290–3: 'glorious war / Which makes ambition (by base men termed sin) / A big and gallant virtue'.

354 quality essential nature.

355 Pride Proud display.

355 circumstance ceremony, pageantry.

And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats  
Th'immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,  
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone.

IAGO Is't possible, my lord?

OTHELLO Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore; 360  
Be sure of it. Give me the ocular proof,  
Or by the worth of mine eternal soul,  
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog  
Than answer my waked wrath!

IAGO Is't come to this?

OTHELLO Make me to see't; or, at the least, so prove it 365  
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop  
To hang a doubt on – or woe upon thy life!

IAGO My noble lord –

OTHELLO If thou dost slander her and torture me, 370  
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;  
On horror's head horrors accumulate;  
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amazed:  
For nothing canst thou to damnation add  
Greater than that.

IAGO O grace! O heaven forgive me!  
Are you a man? Have you a soul? Or sense? 375  
God bu'y you; take mine office. O wretched fool,  
That lov'st to make thine honesty a vice!  
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world!  
To be direct and honest is not safe.  
I thank you for this profit, and from hence 380  
I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence.

OTHELLO Nay, stay: thou shouldst be honest.

356 you] F; ye Q1 356 rude] F; wide Q1 357 dread] F; great Q1 357 clamours] F; clamor Q1 360 thou] F, Q1;  
you Q1 (some copies) 362 mine] F; mans Q1 373-4 For...that] F; one line in Q1 374 forgive] F; defend Q1  
376 mine] F, Q1; thine Q1 (some copies) 377 lov'st] F; liuest Q1 377 thine] F, Q1; mine Q1 (some copies)  
381 sith] F; since Q1

356 mortal engines deadly cannons.

357 Jove's dread clamours i.e. thunder.

360-70 Villain...remorse Compare Cinthio's source story: 'Then the Moor, in the utmost anguish, said, "If you do not make me see with my own eyes what you have told me, be assured, I shall make you realise that it would have been better for you had you been born dumb"' (Bullough, VII, 246).

366 probation proof.

366 hinge nor loop pivot nor holding-string.

372 amazed paralysed with horror.

376 bu'y be with.

377 vice failing (by carrying it to excess). Compare *Tro.* 5.3.37-8: 'Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you, / Which better fits a lion than a man.'

380 profit profitable lesson.

381 sith since.

381 offence injury (to the one who loves).

IAGO I should be wise; for honesty's a fool  
And loses that it works for.

OTHELLO By the world,  
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not; 385  
I think that thou art just, and think thou art not.  
I'll have some proof. Her name, that was as fresh  
As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black  
As mine own face. If there be cords or knives,  
Poison or fire or suffocating streams, 390  
I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!

IAGO I see, sir, you are eaten up with passion.  
I do repent me that I put it to you.  
You would be satisfied?

OTHELLO Would? Nay, I will.

IAGO And may. But how? How satisfied, my lord? 395  
Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?  
Behold her topped?

OTHELLO Death and damnation! O!

IAGO It were a tedious difficulty, I think,  
To bring them to that prospect. Damn them then,  
If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster 400  
More than their own. What then? How then?  
What shall I say? Where's satisfaction?  
It is impossible you should see this,  
Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,  
As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross 405  
As Ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,

384-91 OTHELLO By...satisfied!] F; not in Q1 387 Her] Q2; My F 392 SH IAGO] F; not in Q1 392 sir] Q1; not in F 394 satisfied?] F; satisfied. Q1 394 I] Q1; and I F 396 you, the supervisor,] you, the supervisor Q1; you the super-vision F 400 do] F; did Q1

383 should ought (with a quibble on 'shouldst' at 382).

388 Dian Diana, goddess of chastity and the moon.

389-91 If there...endure it Othello's first reaction to the state of hideous uncertainty is to think of methods of committing suicide.

396 supervisor looker-on.

397 topped See I.I.90 n.

398 tedious hard to arrange, laborious.

400 bolster bed together (lit. 'sharing the same pillow'); with perhaps a sexual pun on the meaning 'support each other'.

401 More Other.

404 prime lecherous. This is the sole use of the

word in this sense in Shakespeare. Compare 'As lecherous as a goat' (Tilley G167).

404 hot sexually excited. Compare *Tro.* 3.1.129-30: 'hot blood begets hot thoughts, and hot thoughts beget hot deeds, and hot deeds is love'.

405 salt lustful. Compare *Tim.* 4.3.83-6: 'Be a whore still... / Make use of thy salt hours.'

405 pride lust. Compare *Lucrece* 437-9: 'His hand... / Smoking with pride, march'd on, to make his stand / On her bare breast.'

406-9 But yet...have't Compare Cinthio's source story: 'Yet I do not lose hope of being able to show you what you do not wish to believe' (Bullough, VII, 246).

If imputation and strong circumstances,  
Which lead directly to the door of truth,  
Will give you satisfaction, you might have't.

OTHELLO Give me a living reason she's disloyal. 410

IAGO I do not like the office;

But sith I am entered in this cause so far –  
Pricked to't by foolish honesty and love –  
I will go on. I lay with Cassio lately,  
And being troubled with a raging tooth  
I could not sleep. 415

There are a kind of men so loose of soul  
That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs.  
One of this kind is Cassio.

In sleep I heard him say, 'Sweet Desdemona,  
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves.' 420

And then, sir, he would gripe and wring my hand,  
Cry, 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard,  
As if he plucked up kisses by the roots

That grew upon my lips; then laid his leg  
Over my thigh, and sighed, and kissed, and then  
Cried, 'Cursèd fate that gave thee to the Moor.' 425

OTHELLO O monstrous, monstrous!

IAGO Nay, this was but his dream.

OTHELLO But this denoted a foregone conclusion.

IAGO 'Tis a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream; 430

And this may help to thicken other proofs

That do demonstrate thinly.

OTHELLO I'll tear her all to pieces!

IAGO Nay, yet be wise; yet we see nothing done,

She may be honest yet. Tell me but this:

409 might have't] F; may ha't Q1 410 she's] F; that shee's Q1 412 in] F; into Q1 415-19] Pope; And...tooth / ...men / ...mutter / ...Cassio F; And...sleep / ...soul / ...affairs / ...Cassio Q1 421 wary] F; merry Q1 423 O] F; out Q1 423 and] Q1; not in F 425-7] Q1; That...thigh / ...fate / ...Moor F 425 then] Q1; not in F 426 sighed] Q1; sigh F 426 kissed] Q1; kisse F 427 Cried] Q1; cry F 429 denoted] F; deuoted Q1 430] Q1; assigned to Othello in F 433 yet be] F; but be Q1

407 imputation...circumstances 'opinion founded on strong circumstantial evidence' (Schmidt).

413 Pricked Spurred (as in *Mac.* 1.7.25-6).

417 loose of soul i.e. loose-tongued about their innermost thoughts.

422 gripe seize.

429 foregone conclusion previous consummation.

430 'Tis a shrewd doubt It gives rise to

grievous suspicion. Compare *MV* 3.2.243: 'There are some shrowd contents in yond same paper.' See supplementary note.

431 thicken substantiate.

434-7 Tell me...gift Compare Cinthio's source story: 'she sometimes carried with her a handkerchief embroidered most delicately in the Moorish fashion, which the Moor had given her and which was treasured by the Lady and her husband too' (Bullough, VII, 246).

Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief  
Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?

435

OTHELLO I gave her such a one; 'twas my first gift.

IAGO I know not that; but such a handkerchief –

I am sure it was your wife's – did I today  
See Cassio wipe his beard with.

OTHELLO

If it be that –

440

IAGO If it be that, or any that was hers,

It speaks against her with the other proofs.

OTHELLO O that the slave had forty thousand lives!

One is too poor, too weak, for my revenge.

Now do I see 'tis true. Look here, Iago,

445

All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven;

'Tis gone.

Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!

Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne

To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,

450

For 'tis of aspics' tongues.

*He kneels.*

IAGO

Yet be content.

OTHELLO O, blood, blood, blood!

IAGO Patience, I say; your mind perhaps may change.

OTHELLO Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic Sea,

Whose icy current and compulsive course

455

Ne'er feels retiring ebb but keeps due on

To the Propontic and the Hellespont,

441 any that] *Malone*; any, it F, Q1 445 true] F; time Q1 446-7] *Pope*; one line in F, Q1 448 thy] Q1; the F 448 cell] Q1; hell F 451 SD] Q1 (*after content*); not in F 451 Yet] F; Pray Q1 452 blood, blood!] F; *Iago*, blood. Q1 453 perhaps] Q1; not in F 454-61 *Iago*... heaven] F; not in Q1 456 feels] Q2; keeps F

436 Spotted with strawberries Embroidered with a strawberry pattern. M. C. Linthicum, *Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, 1936, p. 270, notes that handkerchiefs were highly prized and expensive accessories among the fashionable.

443 slave i.e. Cassio.

446 fond foolish (because given to Desdemona, but by its nature 'heavenly').

448 thy hollow cell Compare *Tit.* 3.1.270: 'Revenge's cave'. As the allusion is to Ate who dwelt in the infernal regions, F's 'the hollow hell' may be correct; compare *JC* 3.1.270-1: 'And Caesar's spirit ranging for revenge, / With Ate by his side come hot from hell'. But the vocative seems to demand the more specific location that Q1 supplies.

449 hearted located in the heart.

450 fraught burden, freight.

451 aspics' asp's, venomous serpents'.

451 content patient, calm.

454-7 Like to... Hellespont This is probably a recollection of two passages in Pliny: 'And the sea Pontus evermore floweth and runneth out into Propontis, but the sea never retireth back again within Pontus' (2.97); 'Out of Pontus the sea always floweth, and never ebbeeth again' (4.13). In the context of the latter passage are also found the words 'icy', 'wide' and 'compulsive course'.

454 Pontic Sea Black Sea.

455 compulsive driving onward, irresistible.

457 Propontic Sea of Marmora, located between the Black Sea and the Aegean.

457 Hellespont Dardanelles Straits, which join the Sea of Marmora and the Aegean.

Even so my bloody thoughts with violent pace  
 Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,  
 Till that a capable and wide revenge  
 460 Swallow them up. Now by yond marble heaven,  
 In the due reverence of a sacred vow  
 I here engage my words.

IAGO Do not rise yet.

*He kneels.*

Witness you ever-burning lights above,  
 You elements that clip us round about,  
 465 Witness that here Iago doth give up  
 The execution of his wit, hands, heart,  
 To wronged Othello's service. Let him command,  
 And to obey shall be in me remorse,  
 What bloody business ever.

*[They rise.]*

OTHELLO I greet thy love,  
 470 Not with vain thanks, but with acceptance bounteous;  
 And will upon the instant put thee to't.  
 Within these three days let me hear thee say  
 That Cassio's not alive.

IAGO My friend is dead;  
 'Tis done at your request. But let her live.  
 475

OTHELLO Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her, damn her!  
 Come, go with me apart. I will withdraw  
 To furnish me with some swift means of death  
 For the fair devil. Now art thou my lieutenant.

IAGO I am your own for ever.  
 480

*Exeunt*

463 SD] Iago *kneels*. Q1 (*after 465*); *not in F* 467 execution] F; excellency Q1 467 hands] F; hand Q1 469 in me] F; *not in Q1*; without *Dover Wilson* 470 business] F; worke so Q1 470 SD] *Capell subst.*; *not in F, Q1* 475] Q1; 'Tis...request / ...live F 475 at your] F; as you Q1 476] Q1; Damn...minx / ...her F 476 damn her, damn her] F; dam her, Q1 479] Q1; For...devil / ...lieutenant F

460 capable ample, capacious.

461 marble Presumably the meaning is 'shining' or 'grained like marble' (as in *Tim.* 4.3.191 and *Cym.* 5.4.120), but it may also have here the sense of 'hard, unfeeling'.

465 clip encompass. Compare *Ant.* 5.2.359-60: 'No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous.'

467 execution operation, activities.

467 wit intelligence.

469-70 to obey...ever i.e. whatever bloody deed I am called upon to perform shall be done because of the pity I feel for Othello. See supplementary note.

472 to't to the proof (as in *AWW* 2.2.48).

476 minx wanton.

3.4 *Enter* DESDEMONA, EMILIA *and* CLOWN.

DESDEMONA Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?

CLOWN I dare not say he lies anywhere.

DESDEMONA Why, man?

CLOWN He's a soldier, and for one to say a soldier lies is  
stabbing. 5

DESDEMONA Go to. Where lodges he?

CLOWN To tell you where he lodges is to tell you where I lie.

DESDEMONA Can anything be made of this?

CLOWN I know not where he lodges, and for me to devise a lodging,  
and say he lies here, or he lies there, were to lie in mine own  
throat. 10

DESDEMONA Can you enquire him out, and be edified by report?

CLOWN I will catechise the world for him: that is, make questions,  
and by them answer.

DESDEMONA Seek him; bid him come hither; tell him I have moved  
my lord on his behalf and hope all will be well. 15

CLOWN To do this is within the compass of man's wit, and therefore  
I will attempt the doing of it. *Exit*

DESDEMONA Where should I lose that handkerchief, Emilia?

EMILIA I know not, madam. 20

DESDEMONA Believe me, I had rather lose my purse  
Full of crusadoes; and but my noble Moor  
Is true of mind and made of no such baseness  
As jealous creatures are, it were enough  
To put him to ill thinking.

EMILIA Is he not jealous? 25

Act 3, Scene 4 3.4] *Scena Quarta*. F; not in Q1 0 SD CLOWN] F; the Clowne Q1 1 Lieutenant] F; the Lieutenant  
Q1 4 SH CLOWN] F; not in Q1 4 one] Q1; me F 4 is] Q1; 'tis F 7-8 CLOWN To...this?] F; not in Q1  
10 he lies here, or] F; not in Q1 10 mine own] F; my Q1 16 on] F; in Q1 17 man's wit] F; a man Q1 18 of]  
Q1; not in F 18 SD] Q1; *Exit Clo.* F 19 that] Q1; the F 21 lose] loose Q1; haue lost F

## Act 3, Scene 4

1 sirrah A term of address to an inferior.  
1 lies lodges.  
2 lies tells an untruth.  
4-5 for one...stabbing Hart compares  
Thomas Dekker, *Seven Deadly Sins*: 'He that gives  
a soldier the lie looks to receive the stab.'  
7 lie deceive.  
10-11 were to lie...throat were to lie foully;  
with a pun on 'were/where' at 10.

13-14 I will...answer The Clown is exploiting  
the educational implications in 'edify', and alluding  
to the instructional method used in the Catechism.

13 make questions 'ask questions'; but also  
'express doubts'.

17 compass range, reach; with a quibble on  
'moved'.

22 crusadoes Gold coins of Portugese origin, so  
called because they bore the figure of Christ's cross.

DESDEMONA Who, he? I think the sun where he was born  
Drew all such humours from him.

*Enter* OTHELLO.

EMILIA Look where he comes.

DESDEMONA I will not leave him now; let Cassio  
Be called to him. – How is't with you, my lord?

OTHELLO Well, my good lady. [*Aside*] O hardness to dissemble! 30  
How do you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA Well, my good lord.

OTHELLO Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.

DESDEMONA It yet hath felt no age, nor known no sorrow.

OTHELLO This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart.  
Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires 35  
A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,  
Much castigation, exercise devout;  
For here's a young and sweating devil here  
That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,  
A frank one.

DESDEMONA You may indeed say so, 40  
For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart.

OTHELLO A liberal hand! The hearts of old gave hands;  
But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.

DESDEMONA I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise.

27 SD] Q1; after comes in F 28–9] Steevens<sup>3</sup>; I...be / ...lord F; I...now / ...lord Q1 28 let] Q1 (some copies); till F; Tis Q1 (some copies) 30 SD] Hammer; not in F, Q1 32] Q1; Give...hand / ...lady F 33 yet hath] hath F; yet has Q1 35 Hot] F; Not Q1 36 prayer] F; praying Q1 44] Q1; I...this / ...promise F 44 now] F; come Q1

27 humours Bodily fluids, the proportions of which were believed to determine a person's temperament. The reference here is to black bile, believed to cause jealousy.

28 let This reading found in some copies of Q1 is obviously correct in view of 46 below.

32 moist A moist palm was believed to indicate youthfulness and amorousness. Compare *Venus and Adonis* 25–6: 'his sweating palm, / The president of pith and liveli-hood'; and Tilley H86: 'A moist palm argues an amorous nature.'

34 argues is proof of.

34 fruitfulness Three layers of meaning: (1) generosity; (2) amorousness; (3) fertility. Compare *Ant.* 1.2.52–3: 'Nay, if an oily palm be not a fruitful prognostication'.

34 liberal A quibble: (1) free; (2) licentious.

36 sequester A legal term for 'restraint, imprisonment'.

37 castigation corrective discipline.

37 exercise devout religious observances.

38 sweating devil spirit of sexual desire.

39 rebels i.e. against virtuous self-control.

40 frank Two layers of meaning: (1) liberal; (2) undisguised.

42–3 The hearts... hearts Warburton detected a topical allusion to the baronetage, the new titled order – ranking below peers and above knights – instituted by James I in 1611, which bears the red hand of Ulster as its badge; but this would mean that the lines were inserted some eight years after the play was written. The heraldic idea grows quite naturally out of 'liberal' (= befitting a gentleman), and William Cornwallis clarifies the reference: 'people used to give their hands and their hearts together, but we think it a finer grace to look asquint, our hand looking one way, and our heart another' (*Essays*, 1600–1).



OTHELLO What promise, chuck?

45

DESDEMONA I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.

OTHELLO I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me;  
Lend me thy handkerchief.

DESDEMONA Here, my lord.

OTHELLO That which I gave you.

DESDEMONA I have it not about me.

OTHELLO Not?

50

DESDEMONA No, faith, my lord.

OTHELLO That's a fault. That handkerchief

Did an Egyptian to my mother give:

She was a charmer and could almost read

The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,

'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father

55

Entirely to her love; but if she lost it

Or made a gift of it, my father's eye

Should hold her loathèd and his spirits should hunt

After new fancies. She dying gave it me,

And bid me when my fate would have me wive,

60

To give it her. I did so, and take heed on't:

Make it a darling, like your precious eye.

To lose't or give't away were such perdition

As nothing else could match.

DESDEMONA Is't possible?

OTHELLO 'Tis true. There's magic in the web of it:

65

A sibyl, that had numbered in the world

The sun to course two hundred compasses,

In her prophetic fury sewed the work;

The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk,

47 sorry] F; sullen Q1 51 faith] Q1; indeed F 58 loathèd] F; lothely Q1 60 wive] Q1; Wiu'd F 63 lose 't] F; loose Q1 67 course] F; make Q1

47 salt and sorry rheum a wretched running cold; with quibbles on 'salt' (= lustful) and 'rheum' (= humour).

53 charmer witch, enchantress.

55 amiable desirable, beloved. Compare *John* 3.4.25: 'O amiable lovely death'.

59 fancies loves.

65-8 There's magic...work The source for this was probably a passage in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, 46, 64-5, in which is described Cassandra's weaving a magical tent for her brother Hector.

65 web weaving.

66 sibyl prophetic. The longevity was probably suggested by the Sibyl of Cumae as depicted in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Compare *IH6* 1.2.55-6: 'The spirit of deep prophecy she hath, / Exceeding the nine sibyls of old Rome.'

67 compasses yearly circuits.

68 prophetic fury frenzy of inspiration. Compare *LLL* 4.3.225: 'What zeal, what fury, hath inspir'd thee now?' The phrase is based on Ariosto's 'il furor profetico'.

68 work embroidered pattern.

And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful  
Conserved of maidens' hearts. 70

DESDEMONA I'faith, is't true?

OTHELLO Most veritable; therefore look to't well.

DESDEMONA Then would to God that I had never seen't!

OTHELLO Ha? Wherefore?

DESDEMONA Why do you speak so startlingly and rash? 75

OTHELLO Is't lost? Is't gone? Speak; is't out of th'way?

DESDEMONA Heaven bless us!

OTHELLO Say you?

DESDEMONA It is not lost, but what and if it were?

OTHELLO How? 80

DESDEMONA I say it is not lost.

OTHELLO Fetch't, let me see't.

DESDEMONA Why so I can, sir; but I will not now.

This is a trick to put me from my suit.

Pray you let Cassio be received again.

OTHELLO Fetch me the handkerchief. My mind misgives. 85

DESDEMONA Come, come;

You'll never meet a more sufficient man.

OTHELLO The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA I pray, talk me of Cassio.

OTHELLO The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA A man that all his time

Hath founded his good fortunes on your love, 90

Shared dangers with you –

OTHELLO The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA I'faith, you are to blame.

OTHELLO Zounds! *Exit*

EMILIA Is not this man jealous?

DESDEMONA I ne'er saw this before.

Sure there's some wonder in this handkerchief; 95

70 which] F; with Q1 71 Conserved] F; Conserues Q1 71 I'faith,] Q1 (I faith); Indeed? F 73 God] Q1; Heauen F  
75 rash] F; rashly Q1 77 Heaven] Q1; not in F 80 How] F; Ha Q1 82 sir] Q1; not in F 84 Pray you] F;  
I pray Q1 85] Q1; Fetch...handkerchief / ...misgives F 85 the] F; that Q1 86-7] Q1; as prose in F  
88-9 DESDEMONA I pray...handkerchief!] Q1; not in F 92 I' faith] Q1; Insooth F 93 Zounds] Q1; Away F

70 mummy Concoction supposed to be derived from embalmed bodies and used for magical or medicinal purposes.

71 Conserved of Prepared as a drug from.

75 startlingly disjointedly. Compare *TN* 2.2.21: 'For she did speak in starts distractedly.'

75 rash excitedly.

76 out of th'way misplaced, gone astray.

87 sufficient able.

94 saw this i.e. perceived this trait.

95 wonder magical quality.

I am most unhappy in the loss of it.

EMILIA 'Tis not a year or two shows us a man.

They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;

They eat us hungerly, and when they are full,

They belch us.

*Enter IAGO and CASSIO.*

Look you, Cassio and my husband. 100

IAGO There is no other way: 'tis she must do't.

And lo, the happiness! Go, and importune her.

DESDEMONA How now, good Cassio! What's the news with you?

CASSIO Madam, my former suit. I do beseech you

That, by your virtuous means, I may again 105

Exist and be a member of his love,

Whom I, with all the office of my heart,

Entirely honour. I would not be delayed.

If my offence be of such mortal kind

That nor my service past nor present sorrows, 110

Nor purposed merit in futurity,

Can ransom me into his love again,

But to know so must be my benefit:

So shall I clothe me in a forced content,

And shut myself up in some other course 115

To fortune's alms.

DESDEMONA Alas, thrice-gentle Cassio,

My advocacy is not now in tune:

My lord is not my lord; nor should I know him,

Were he in favour as in humour altered.

So help me every spirit sanctified, 120

As I have spoken for you all my best,

96 the] F, Q1; this Q1 (*some copies*) 96 of it] F; *not in* Q1 100] Q1; They... us / ... husband F 100 SD] F; *after*  
96 in Q1 107 office] F; duty Q1 110 nor my] F; neither Q1 115 shut] F; shoote Q1

98 but stomachs only appetites. Emilia characteristically sees sexual desire in terms of eating.

102 happiness good luck, fortunate occurrence.

105 virtuous efficacious.

107 office devoted service. Compare *Ant.* 1.1.5: 'office and devotion of their view'.

113 But Merely.

113 benefit i.e. because he will know the worst.

115 shut myself up in confine myself to.

116 To fortune's alms i.e. accepting whatever fortune can spare.

118-19 My lord... altered Compare Cinthio's source story: 'I do not know what to make of the Moor. He used to be all love towards me, but in the last few days he has become quite another man' (Bullough, VII, 248).

119 favour external appearance. Compare *AYLI* 5.4.26-7: 'I do remember in this shepherd boy / Some lively touches of my daughter's favour.'

And stood within the blank of his displeasure  
 For my free speech! You must awhile be patient.  
 What I can do, I will; and more I will  
 Than for myself I dare. Let that suffice you.

125

IAGO Is my lord angry?

EMILIA He went hence but now  
 And certainly in strange unquietness.

IAGO Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon  
 When it hath blown his ranks into the air,  
 And like the devil from his very arm  
 Puffed his own brother – and is he angry?  
 Something of moment then. I will go meet him.  
 There's matter in't indeed if he be angry.

130

DESDEMONA I prithee do so.

*Exit Iago*

Something sure of state,  
 Either from Venice, or some unhatched practice  
 Made demonstrable here in Cyprus to him,  
 Hath puddled his clear spirit; and in such cases  
 Men's natures wrangle with inferior things,  
 Though great ones are their object. 'Tis even so;  
 For let our finger ache, and it endues  
 Our other healthful members even to a sense  
 Of pain. Nay, we must think men are not gods,  
 Nor of them look for such observancy  
 As fits the bridal. Beshrew me much, Emilia,  
 I was – unhandsome warrior as I am –  
 Arraigning his unkindness with my soul;  
 But now I find I had suborned the witness

135

140

145

131 is he] F; can he be Q1 134 SD] *Exit. F (after 133); not in Q1 139–42] F; Though...object / ...ache / ...members / ...think / ...gods Q1 139 their] F; the Q1 141 a] F; that Q1 143 observancy] F; observances Q1*

122 within the blank of as the centre of the target for. Compare *Ham.* 4.1.42: 'As level as the cannon to his blank'.

132 moment immediate importance.

134 of state to do with state affairs.

135 unhatched practice previously undisclosed conspiracy.

137 puddled muddied, sullied the purity of.

139 object real point of concern.

140 endues brings, leads.

142 Nay, we...gods Proverbial: 'We are but men, not gods' (Tilley M593).

143 observancy tender attention. Compare *AYLI* 5.2.94–6: '[Love] is... / All adoration, duty, and observance'.

145 unhandsome unskilful (with perhaps also the meaning of 'unjust').

145 warrior Desdemona is recalling Othello's greeting at 2.1.174.

147 suborned the witness influenced the witness to give false evidence.

And he's indicted falsely.

EMILIA Pray heaven it be state matters, as you think,  
And no conception nor no jealous toy  
Concerning you. 150

DESDEMONA Alas the day, I never gave him cause.

EMILIA But jealous souls will not be answered so.  
They are not ever jealous for the cause,  
But jealous for they're jealous. 'Tis a monster  
Begot upon itself, born on itself. 155

DESDEMONA Heaven keep that monster from Othello's mind.

EMILIA Lady, amen!

DESDEMONA I will go seek him. Cassio, walk here about.  
If I do find him fit, I'll move your suit  
And seek to effect it to my uttermost. 160

CASSIO I humbly thank your ladyship.

*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia*

*Enter BIANCA.*

BIANCA 'Save you, friend Cassio.

CASSIO What make you from home?  
How is it with you, my most fair Bianca?  
I'faith, sweet love, I was coming to your house. 165

BIANCA And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.  
What! Keep a week away? Seven days and nights?  
Eight score eight hours? And lovers' absent hours  
More tedious than the dial eight score times!  
O weary reckoning!

CASSIO Pardon me, Bianca. 170  
I have this while with leaden thoughts been pressed;  
But I shall in a more continue time

149-51] Q1; Pray...be / ...conception / ...you F 155 'Tis] Q1; It is F 157 that] Q1; the F  
162 SD.1 *Exeunt...Emilia*] Q1 (after 162); *Exit. F* (after 160) 162 SD.2 *Enter BIANCA*] F; after Cassio in 163 in Q1  
164 is it] Q1; is't F 165 I'faith] Q1; Indeed F 170 O] F; No Q1 171 leaden] F; laden Q1 172 continue] F;  
conuenient Q1

150 conception fantasy, false supposition.

150 toy fancy, whim.

155-6 'Tis a monster...itself Compare Iago's definition at 3.3.167-9.

160 fit receptive.

163 'Save i.e. God save.

167-70 What...reckoning See pp. 15-16 above.

168 Eight score eight i.e. one hundred and sixty plus eight (= seven days and nights).

169 the dial the whole round of the clock.

171 The image here is based on the torture of being pressed to death.

172 continue uninterrupted. Q1's 'conuenient' is possible, but not probable.

Strike off this score of absence. Sweet Bianca,  
Take me this work out.

- BIANCA O Cassio, whence came this?  
This is some token from a newer friend. 175  
To the felt absence now I feel a cause.  
Is't come to this? Well, well.
- CASSIO Go to, woman!  
Throw your vile guesses in the devil's teeth  
From whence you have them. You are jealous now  
That this is from some mistress, some remembrance. 180  
No, by my faith, Bianca.
- BIANCA Why, whose is it?  
CASSIO I know not neither; I found it in my chamber.  
I like the work well. Ere it be demanded –  
As like enough it will – I'd have it copied.  
Take it and do't, and leave me for this time. 185
- BIANCA Leave you? Wherefore?  
CASSIO I do attend here on the general;  
And think it no addition, nor my wish,  
To have him see me womaned.
- BIANCA Why, I pray you?  
CASSIO Not that I love you not.
- BIANCA But that you do not love me. 190  
I pray you, bring me on the way a little,  
And say if I shall see you soon at night.
- CASSIO 'Tis but a little way that I can bring you,  
For I attend here; but I'll see you soon.
- BIANCA 'Tis very good; I must be circumstanced. 195

*Exeunt*

177 Well, well] F; not in Q1 181 by my faith] Q1; in good troth F 182] Q1; I...neither / ...chamber F  
182 neither] F; sweete Q1 184 I'd] Q1; I would F 189-90 BIANCA Why...not.] F; not in Q1 195 SD] Q1; *Exeunt*  
*omnes.* F

173 Strike...score Pay off this debt. Cassio takes up the idea in Bianca's 'reckoning' and quibbles on 'score'. Compare *AWW* 5.3.56-7: 'That thou didst love her, strike some scores away / From the great compt.'

174 Take...out Copy this embroidered pattern for me.

175 friend mistress.

177 Well, well Compare Tilley w269: 'Well, well is a word of malice.'

182 I found...chamber See 3.3.322-3.

183 demanded enquired for.

188 addition In Shakespeare this usually means 'title' (as at 4.1.102), but here the sense seems to be 'credit to me', which it may also have in *Ham.* 1.4.19-20: 'with swinish phrase / Soil our addition'.

189 womaned accompanied by a woman.

191 bring accompany.

195 be circumstanced accept conditions as they are.

4.1 *Enter OTHELLO and IAGO.*

IAGO Will you think so?

OTHELLO Think so, Iago?

IAGO What,

To kiss in private?

OTHELLO An unauthorised kiss!

IAGO Or to be naked with her friend in bed

An hour or more, not meaning any harm?

OTHELLO Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm? 5

It is hypocrisy against the devil.

They that mean virtuously and yet do so,

The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.

IAGO So they do nothing, 'tis a venial slip;

But if I give my wife a handkerchief – 10

OTHELLO What then?

IAGO Why, then 'tis hers, my lord; and being hers,

She may, I think, bestow't on any man.

OTHELLO She is protectress of her honour too.

May she give that? 15

IAGO Her honour is an essence that's not seen:

They have it very oft that have it not.

But for the handkerchief –

OTHELLO By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it.

Thou said'st – O it comes o'er my memory, 20

As doth the raven o'er the infected house,

Boding to all! – he had my handkerchief.

IAGO Ay, what of that?

OTHELLO That's not so good now.

IAGO What

Act 4, Scene 1 4.1] *Actus Quartus. Scena Prima.* F; *Actus. 4* Q1 0 SD] F; *Enter Iago and Othello.* Q1 1–2 What...private] *one line in F, Q1 3, 5 in bed*] F; abed Q1 9 So] Q1; If F 21 infected] Q1; infectious F 23–4 What...wrong] *Dyce; one line in F, Q1*

## Act 4, Scene 1

6 hypocrisy...devil As hypocrisy against God entails a pretence of good to conceal evil, so evil actions pretending to virtue are the opposite: 'hypocrisy against the devil'.

9 So If, as long as.

17 i.e. those women who have actually lost their honour are often credited with still having it.

21 As doth...house The raven was proverbially a bird of ill-omen (Tilley R33). It was also thought

to be connected with the spreading of infections; compare Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta* (ed. L. Kirschbaum) 2.1.1–4: 'like the sad presaging raven that tolls / The sick man's passport in her hollow beak / And in the shadow of the silent night / Doth shake contagion from her sable wings'. For a more symbolic use of the same image, see *Mac.* 1.5.38–40.

21 infected plague-stricken.

If I had said I had seen him do you wrong?  
 Or heard him say – as knaves be such abroad, 25  
 Who having by their own importunate suit  
 Or voluntary dotage of some mistress  
 Convincèd or supplied them, cannot choose  
 But they must blab –

OTHELLO Hath he said anything?

IAGO He hath, my lord; but be you well assured 30  
 No more than he'll unswear.

OTHELLO What hath he said?

IAGO Faith, that he did – I know not what he did.

OTHELLO What, what?

IAGO Lie –

OTHELLO With her?

IAGO With her, on her, what you will.

OTHELLO Lie with her? Lie on her? We say lie on her when they belie 35  
 her. Lie with her! Zounds, that's fulsome! Handkerchief –  
 confessions – handkerchief! To confess and be hanged for his  
 labour. First to be hanged and then to confess. I tremble at it.  
 Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without  
 some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus. Pish! Noses, 40  
 ears, and lips. Is't possible? – Confess? Handkerchief? O devil!

[*He falls in a trance.*]

IAGO Work on,

My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught;  
 And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,  
 All guiltless, meet reproach. What ho, my lord! 45  
 My lord, I say! Othello!

27 Or] F; Or by the Q1 28 Convincèd] F, Q1; Coniured Q1 (*some copies*) 32 Faith] Q1; Why F 33 What,] F;  
 But Q1 36 Zounds] Q1; *not in F* 36 Handkerchief] F; handkerchers Q1 37 confessions] F; Confession Q1  
 37 handkerchief] F; handkerchers Q1 37–41 To...devil] F; *not in Q1* 41 SD] *Falls in a Traunce.* F; *He falls downe.*  
 Q1; *not in some copies of Q1* 42–6] F; *as prose in Q1* 43 work] Q1; workes F

27 voluntary dotage willing infatuation.

28 Convincèd Overcome, overpowered. Compare *Mac.* 1.7.63–4: 'his two chamberlains / Will I with wine and wassail so convince'.

28 supplied satisfied sexually. Compare *MM* 5.1.210–12: 'this is the body / That took away the match from Isabel, / And did supply thee at thy garden-house'.

35 belie vilify, slander.

36 fulsome rank, foul. Compare *MV* 1.3.80–6: 'the ewes being rank... / And in the doing of the deed of the kind, / He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes'.

37 confess and be hanged Proverbial (Tilley c587).

38 First to...confess Presumably Othello conceives of Cassio's being executed with no shriving-time allowed.

39–40 Nature...instruction i.e. my natural faculties would not become obliterated by strong emotion unless there were some basis of fact in what I have heard.

45 reproach shame, disgrace (as in *R3* 3.7.231).



*Enter* CASSIO.

How now, Cassio!

CASSIO What's the matter?

IAGO My lord is fallen into an epilepsy.

This is his second fit; he had one yesterday.

CASSIO Rub him about the temples.

IAGO No, forbear.

50

The lethargy must have his quiet course.

If not, he foams at mouth and by and by

Breaks out to savage madness. Look, he stirs.

Do you withdraw yourself a little while;

He will recover straight. When he is gone,

55

I would on great occasion speak with you.

[*Exit Cassio*]

How is it, general? Have you not hurt your head?

OTHELLO Dost thou mock me?

IAGO I mock you? No, by heaven!

Would you would bear your fortune like a man!

OTHELLO A hornèd man's a monster and a beast.

60

IAGO There's many a beast then in a populous city,

And many a civil monster.

OTHELLO Did he confess it?

IAGO Good sir, be a man:

Think every bearded fellow that's but yoked

May draw with you. There's millions now alive

65

That nightly lie in those unproper beds

Which they dare swear peculiar. Your case is better.

O, 'tis the spite of hell, the fiend's arch-mock,

To lip a wanton in a secure couch

46 SD] F; after Cassio in Q1 50 No, forbear] Q1; not in F 56 SD] Rowe, Q2 (after me at 58); not in F, Q1  
58 you? No] Q1; you not F 59 fortune] F; fortunes Q1 63 it] F; not in Q1 63 Good] F, Q1; God Q1 (some copies)  
66 lie] F; lyes Q1 69 couch] F; Coach Q1

51 lethargy coma, unconsciousness (as in *Cor.* 4.5.224).

56 great occasion an important matter.

58 Dost thou mock me? Othello refers to the cuckold's horns.

60 hornèd man cuckold.

62 civil civilised (as in *Rom.* Prologue 4).

64 yoked A quibble: (1) married; (2) burdened (with wrongs).

65 draw A quibble: (1) pull (like yoked oxen); (2) join.

66 unproper not (solely) their own (because shared by their wives' lovers). Leontes in his jealous fit has a similar vision; see *WT* 1.2.191–6.

67 peculiar their own.

69 lip kiss.

69 secure free from care, free from suspicion. Compare *Wiv.* 2.2.300–1: 'Page is an ass, a secure ass; he will trust his wife.'

And to suppose her chaste! No, let me know; 70  
 And knowing what I am, I know what she shall be.

OTHELLO O, thou art wise; 'tis certain.

IAGO

Stand you awhile apart,

Confine yourself but in a patient list.

Whilst you were here, o'erwhelmèd with your grief –

A passion most unsuiting such a man – 75

Cassio came hither. I shifted him away

And laid good scuse upon your ecstasy;

Bade him anon return and here speak with me,

The which he promised. Do but encave yourself,

And mark the fleers, the gibes, and notable scorns 80

That dwell in every region of his face;

For I will make him tell the tale anew,

Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when

He hath and is again to cope your wife.

I say but mark his gesture. Marry, patience, 85

Or I shall say you're all in all in spleen

And nothing of a man.

OTHELLO

Dost thou hear, Iago?

I will be found most cunning in my patience,

But – dost thou hear – most bloody.

IAGO

That's not amiss.

But yet keep time in all. Will you withdraw? 90

[*Othello withdraws.*]

Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,

A housewife that by selling her desires

74 o'erwhelmèd] F; ere while, mad Q1 75 unsuiting] Q1; resulting F; unfitting Q1 (*some copies*) 77 scuse] Q1; scuses F  
 78 Bade] F; Bid Q1 78 return] F; retire Q1 79 Do] F; not in Q1 80 fleers] F; leeres Q1; geeres Q1 (*some copies*)  
 80 gibes] F; libes Q1; gibes Q1 (*some copies*) 84 hath] F; has Q1 90 SD] Rowe; not in F, Q1

71 what I am i.e. a cuckold.

71 she shall be will happen to her.

73 in a patient list within the bounds of self-control.

76 shifted him away got rid of him by a stratagem.

77 ecstasy fit, trance; an extension of the usual Shakespearean usage of being outside oneself.

79 encave conceal.

80 fleers sneers. Compare *Rom.* 1.5.57: 'To leer and scorn at our solemnity'.

80 notable observable, obvious.

84 cope A quibble: (1) meet; (2) copulate with.

85 gesture bearing, demeanour (as in *AYLI* 5.2.62).

86 all-in...spleen totally governed by passion.

90 keep time be controlled (a musical term).

91-101 Now will...wrong Compare Cinthio's source story: 'Accordingly he spoke to the Corporal one day while the Moor was standing where he could see them as they talked; and chatting of quite other matters than the Lady, he laughed heartily and, displaying great surprise, he moved his head about and gestured with his hands, acting as if he were listening to marvels' (Bullough, VII, 247).

92 housewife hussy (pronounced 'huzif' at the time). The word could mean 'prostitute', and clearly this is the sense in which Iago is using it here. But Bianca appears not to be a professional courtesan exactly (see 5.1.121-3).

Buys herself bread and clothes. It is a creature  
That dotes on Cassio; as 'tis the strumpet's plague  
To beguile many and be beguiled by one. 95  
He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain  
From the excess of laughter. Here he comes.

*Enter Cassio.*

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad;  
And his unbookish jealousy must construe  
Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviours 100  
Quite in the wrong. How do you now, lieutenant?

CASSIO The worser that you give me the addition  
Whose want even kills me.

IAGO Ply Desdemona well and you are sure on't.  
Now if this suit lay in Bianca's power, 105  
How quickly should you speed!

CASSIO Alas, poor caitiff!

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Look how he laughs already!

IAGO I never knew a woman love man so.

CASSIO Alas, poor rogue! I think, i'faith, she loves me.

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out. 110

IAGO Do you hear, Cassio?

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Now he importunes him  
To tell it o'er. Go to, well said, well said!

IAGO She gives it out that you shall marry her.  
Do you intend it?

CASSIO Ha, ha, ha! 115

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Do you triumph, Roman? Do you triumph?

CASSIO I marry her? What! A customer! I prithee, bear some

93 clothes] Q1; Cloath F 96 refrain] Q1; restraine F 97 SD] F; after 95 in Q1 99 construe] conster Q1; conserue F  
100 behaviours] F; behaiour Q1 101 now] Q1; not in F 105 power] Q1; dowre F 107, 110, 111, 116, 119,  
123, 126, 131, 136, 151 SD *Aside*] Theobald; not in F, Q1 108 a] Q1; not in F 109 i' faith] Q1; indeed F  
110-12] F; Now...on / ...said Q1 112 o'er] F; on Q1 112 well said,] F; not in Q1 116 you triumph,] Q1; ye  
triumph, F 117-18] Q2; I...bear / ...it / ...ha F; I...wit / ...ha Q1 117 her] Q1; not in F 117 What! a  
customer!] F; not in Q1 117 I prithee] Q1; prythee F

94-5 'tis the...one Compare 'He that beguiles  
another is oft beguiled himself' (Tilley D179).

99 unbookish ignorant (of the ways of the  
world); as opposed to Iago's 'wisdom' (72 above).

99 construe The idea of Othello as an ignorant  
schoolboy is an extension of 'unbookish'.

100 light cheerful, merry (as in *TGV* 1.2.81).

102 addition title, rank.

106 speed prosper, succeed.

106 caitiff wretch.

110 faintly without seriously intending it.  
Compare *R2* 5.3.103: 'He prays but faintly, and  
would be denied.'

112 said i.e. done.

116 Roman conqueror. Presumably the associa-  
tion is with Roman triumphs.

117 customer common woman, harlot (as in  
*AWW* 5.3.286).

117-18 bear...wit think more charitably of my  
judgement.

charity to my wit. Do not think it so unwholesome. Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO [*Aside*] So, so, so, so: they laugh that wins.

IAGO Faith, the cry goes that you shall marry her. 120

CASSIO Prithee, say true.

IAGO I am a very villain else.

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Have you scored me? Well.

CASSIO This is the monkey's own giving out. She is persuaded I will marry her out of her own love and flattery, not out of my promise. 125

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Iago beckons me. Now he begins the story.

CASSIO She was here even now. She haunts me in every place. I was the other day talking on the sea-bank with certain Venetians, and thither comes this bauble and, by this hand, falls me thus about my neck. 130

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Crying 'O dear Cassio!' as it were. His gesture imports it.

CASSIO So hangs and lolls and weeps upon me, so hales and pulls me. Ha, ha, ha! 135

OTHELLO [*Aside*] Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber. O, I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to!

CASSIO Well, I must leave her company.

IAGO Before me, look where she comes! 140

CASSIO 'Tis such another fitchew! Marry, a perfumed one.

*Enter* BIANCA.

What do you mean by this haunting of me?

119 they] F; not in Q1 120 Faith] Q1; Why F 120 that you shall] Q2; that you F; you shall Q1 123 scored me? Well] F; stor'd me well Q1 124-6] Q1; This...out / ...her / ...promise F 127 beckons] Q1; becomes F 130 this] Q1; the F 130 and] F; not in Q1 130 by this hand] Q1; not in F 130 falls me] F; she falls Q1 134 hales] Q1; shakes F 137 O] F; not in Q1 141 SH CASSIO] F; not in Q1 141 SD] after 140 in F; after 139 in Q1

118 unwholesome morally tainted.

119 they...wins Proverbial (Tilley L93).

120 cry rumour, report.

123 scored me There are three possible meanings: (1) branded, wounded me (as in *Ant.* 4.7.12); (2) posted my name (as a cuckold) (as in *Shr.* Induction 2.24); (3) made my reckoning (as in *Sonnets* 122.10).

125 love love for me.

125 flattery self-flattery (leading to delusion). Compare *TGV* 4.4.188: 'Unless I flatter with myself too much'.

129 sea-bank sea-shore.

130 bauble worthless plaything.

137 nose There is probably a sexual connotation here; see Hulme, p. 135.

140 Before me Upon my soul, before God.

141 such another A common idiom meaning 'one just like all the others'.

141 fitchew polecat, noted for its rank odour and lechery. Compare *Lear* 4.6.123-4: 'The fitchew... goes to't / With a... riotous appetite.' It was a slang term for a loose woman; compare Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *Northward Hoe* (ed. W. C. Hazlitt) 1.1: 'Your captains were wont to take their leaves of their London pole-cats (their wenches I mean, sir).'

BIANCA Let the devil and his dam haunt you! What did you mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was a fine fool to take it. I must take out the work? A likely piece of work that you should find it in your chamber and not know who left it there! This is some minx's token, and I must take out the work? There, give it your hobby-horse, wheresoever you had it. I'll take out no work on't.

CASSIO How now, my sweet Bianca! How now, how now!

OTHELLO [*Aside*] By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!

BIANCA If you'll come to supper tonight, you may. If you will not, come when you are next prepared for. *Exit*

IAGO After her, after her!

CASSIO Faith, I must. She'll rail in the streets else.

IAGO Will you sup there?

CASSIO Faith, I intend so.

IAGO Well, I may chance to see you; for I would very fain speak with you.

CASSIO Prithee, come; will you?

IAGO Go to; say no more.

*Exit Cassio*

OTHELLO [*Coming forward.*] How shall I murder him, Iago?

IAGO Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?

OTHELLO O, Iago!

IAGO And did you see the handkerchief?

OTHELLO Was that mine?

IAGO Yours, by this hand. And to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife: she gave it him, and he hath given it his whore.

OTHELLO I would have him nine years a-killing. A fine woman, a fair woman, a sweet woman!

IAGO Nay, you must forget that.

OTHELLO Ay, let her rot and perish, and be damned tonight, for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone: I strike it and it hurts my hand. O, the world hath not a sweeter creature! She

145 work] F; whole worke Q1 146 not know] Q1; know not F 148 your] F; the Q1 152 If you'll] F; An you'll Q1 152 If you] F; an you Q1 155 Faith] Q1; Yes F 155 streets] F; streete Q1 157 Faith] Q1; Yes F 161 SD] Q1; not in F 162 SD] *Capell subst.*; not in F, Q1 167-8] F; not in Q1 171 that] F; not in Q1 172 Ay] F; And Q1 174 hath] F; has Q1

143 dam mother. 'The devil and his dam' was a proverbial phrase (Tilley D225).

145 take...work See 3.4.174 n.

145 piece of work story, business.

148 hobby-horse a loose woman. Compare *WT* 1.2.276-8: 'My wife's a hobby-horse, deserves a

name / As rank as any flax-wench that puts to / Before her troth-plight.'

153 you...prepared for the next time I shall expect you (i.e. never).

167 Yours...hand Note the quibble by means of which Iago makes the common oath the literal truth.

might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks. 175

IAGO Nay, that's not your way.

OTHELLO Hang her, I do but say what she is: so delicate with her needle,  
an admirable musician – O, she will sing the savageness out of a  
bear – of so high and plenteous wit and invention –

IAGO She's the worse for all this. 180

OTHELLO O, a thousand, thousand times – and then of so gentle  
a condition!

IAGO Ay, too gentle.

OTHELLO Nay, that's certain; but yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago,  
the pity of it, Iago! 185

IAGO If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend;  
for if it touch not you, it comes near nobody.

OTHELLO I will chop her into messes. Cuckold me!

IAGO O, 'tis foul in her.

OTHELLO With mine officer! 190

IAGO That's fouler.

OTHELLO Get me some poison, Iago, this night. I'll not expostulate  
with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again – this  
night, Iago.

IAGO Do it not with poison; strangle her in her bed, even the bed she  
hath contaminated. 195

OTHELLO Good, good! The justice of it pleases; very good!

IAGO And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker. You shall hear more  
by midnight.

OTHELLO Excellent good! 200

*A trumpet [sounds within].*

What trumpet is that same?

IAGO I warrant something from Venice.

181 O] F; not in Q1 181 thousand, thousand] Q1; thousand, a thousand F 184 Nay] F; I Q1 184 O Iago] F; not in Q1 185 of it, Iago] F; not in Q1 186 are] F; be Q1 187 touch] F; touches Q1 192 night. I'll] F; night I'll Q1 197] Q1; Good, good / ... good F 198–9] Q1; And...undertaker / ...midnight F 200 SD] *Theobald subst.; A Trumpet. Q1 (after 199); not in F 202–4] I...Venice / ...duke / ...him F; Something...Lodovico / ...him Q1 202 I warrant] F; not in Q1 202 Venice] F; Venice sure Q1*

176 your way proper course (of thought).

179 invention imagination.

181–2 gentle a condition Either (1) well born (as in *H5* 4 Prologue 45); or (2) amiable a character (as in *Wiv.* 1.4.139).

183 gentle kind, yielding (to men) (as in *Lucrece* 545).

186 fond over stupid about, doting on.

186 patent license (as in *AWW* 4.5.66).

187 comes near affects, harms.

188 messes pieces of meat.

192–6 Get me...contaminated Compare Cinthio's source story: 'They were discussing whether the Lady should perish by poison or the dagger, and not deciding on either of them' (*Bulough*, VII, 250).

192 expostulate argue at length (as in *TGV* 3.1.253).

193 unprovide...mind weaken my resolution.

198 be his undertaker deal with him.

*Enter* LODOVICO, DESDEMONA *and* ATTENDANTS.

'Tis Lodovico. This comes from the duke. See, your wife's with him.

LODOVICO God save you, worthy general!

OTHELLO With all my heart, sir. 205

LODOVICO The duke and senators of Venice greet you.

*[He gives Othello a letter.]*

OTHELLO I kiss the instrument of their pleasures.

*[He opens the letter and reads.]*

DESDEMONA And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

IAGO I am very glad to see you, signior;

Welcome to Cyprus. 210

LODOVICO I thank you. How does Lieutenant Cassio?

IAGO Lives, sir.

DESDEMONA Cousin, there's fallen between him and my lord

An unkind breach; but you shall make all well.

OTHELLO Are you sure of that? 215

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO 'This fail you not to do, as you will —'

LODOVICO He did not call; he's busy in the paper.

Is there division 'twixt my lord and Cassio?

DESDEMONA A most unhappy one; I would do much 220

T'atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.

OTHELLO Fire and brimstone!

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO Are you wise?

DESDEMONA What, is he angry?

LODOVICO Maybe the letter moved him; 225

For as I think they do command him home,

Deputing Cassio in his government.

DESDEMONA By my troth, I am glad on't.

OTHELLO Indeed!

DESDEMONA My lord?

202 SD] *after 199 in F, Q1* 203 Lodovico. This comes] *Lodovico*, this, comes F; *Lodovico*, Come Q1 203 See] F; and see Q1 205 God save you] *Sau* you F; *God saue* the Q1 206 senators] Q1; the Senators F 206 SD] *Rowe subst.*; *not in F, Q1* 207 SD] *Capell subst.*; *not in F, Q1* 209–10] F; *one line in Q1* 219 'twixt my] F; *betweene thy Q1* 228 *By my troth]* Q1; *Trust me F*

214 unkind breach unnatural separation, uncharacteristic quarrel.

226 For as Because.

227 government office of command (as in *1H4* 4.1.19).

228 on't of it.

OTHELLO I am glad to see you mad.

DESDEMONA

Why, sweet Othello?

OTHELLO Devil!

230

[*He strikes her.*]

DESDEMONA I have not deserved this.

LODOVICO My lord, this would not be believed in Venice,  
Though I should swear I saw't. 'Tis very much.  
Make her amends; she weeps.

OTHELLO

O devil, devil!

If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,  
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.  
Out of my sight!

235

DESDEMONA

I will not stay to offend you.

LODOVICO Truly, an obedient lady.

I do beseech your lordship, call her back.

OTHELLO Mistress!

240

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO What would you with her, sir?

LODOVICO

Who? I, my lord?

OTHELLO Ay, you did wish that I would make her turn.

Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on,  
And turn again. And she can weep, sir, weep.  
And she's obedient; as you say, obedient,  
Very obedient – proceed you in your tears –  
Concerning this, sir, – O, well-painted passion! –  
I am commanded home – get you away!

245

229 mad] F, Q1; madam conj. Nicholson 229 Why] F; How Q1 230 SD] Theobald subst.; not in F, Q1 235 woman's] F; womens Q1 238 an] Q1; not in F 249 home] F; here Q1

229 mad The meaning here is obscure. It may be the counterbalance of 'wise' (224), with Othello saying 'I am happy to see that you have so obviously lost your mind (to speak so blatantly about your love for Cassio).' Nicholson's suggestion that Othello is being heavily formal ('I am glad to see you, madam'), with F's and Q1's 'mad' being an abbreviation of 'madam' is attractive but lacks sufficient authority for adoption.

233 very much outrageous.

235 teem with be impregnated by, spawn with (as in *Tim.* 4.3.190).

236 falls lets fall.

236 prove Either (1) turn into; or (2) be the same as the tears of.

236 crocodile Compare the proverbial saying

'crocodile tears' (Tilley c831). Hakluyt's account of Sir John Hawkins's second voyage (1565) includes a description of the crocodile's supposed propensity for dissimulation: 'His nature is ever, when he would have his prey, to cry and sob like a Christian body, to provoke them to come to him, and then he snatcheth at them.'

243 turn come back.

244–5 turn...again Quibbles on the meanings: (1) come back (as in *AYLI* 2.7.162); (2) be fickle (as in *TGV* 2.2.4); (3) go for sexual intercourse (as in *MV* 1.3.81).

246 obedient yielding to whatever is asked of her (with a sexual innuendo).

248 painted passion simulated emotion.



I'll send for you anon. – Sir, I obey the mandate, 250  
 And will return to Venice. – Hence, avaunt!

[*Exit Desdemona*]

Cassio shall have my place. And, sir, tonight  
 I do entreat that we may sup together.

You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus. Goats and monkeys! *Exit*

LODOVICO Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate 255  
 Call all-in-all sufficient? Is this the nature  
 Whom passion could not shake? Whose solid virtue  
 The shot of accident nor dart of chance  
 Could neither graze nor pierce?

IAGO He is much changed.

LODOVICO Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain? 260

IAGO He's that he is; I may not breathe my censure  
 What he might be. If what he might he is not,  
 I would to heaven he were.

LODOVICO What! Strike his wife!

IAGO Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew  
 That stroke would prove the worst.

LODOVICO Is it his use? 265  
 Or did the letters work upon his blood  
 And new-create this fault?

IAGO Alas, alas!

It is not honesty in me to speak  
 What I have seen and known. You shall observe him,  
 And his own courses will denote him so, 270  
 That I may save my speech. Do but go after,  
 And mark how he continues.

LODOVICO I am sorry that I am deceived in him.

*Exeunt*

251 SD] *Rowe*; not in F, Q1 254] Q1; You...Cyprus / ...monkeys F 254 SD] F, Q1; not in some copies of Q1  
 256 Is] F; not in Q1 256 nature] F; noble nature Q1 261 is] is: F; is, Q1 261 censure] censure. F; censure, Q1  
 262 be.] be: F; be, Q1 262 what] F; as Q1 267 this] Q1; his F

254 Goats and monkeys See 3.3.404 and n. mind, I wish to God he were (for only that would  
 258 shot...chance Compare *Ham.* 3.1.57: serve to excuse his actions).  
 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'. 265 use custom (as in *MM* 3.2.126).  
 261 censure See 2.3.174 n. 266 blood passion (here of anger).  
 262-3 If what...were i.e. if he is not out of his 270 courses will denote actions will reveal.

## 4.2 Enter OTHELLO and EMILIA.

OTHELLO You have seen nothing then?

EMILIA Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.

OTHELLO Yes, you have seen Cassio and she together.

EMILIA But then I saw no harm, and then I heard

Each syllable that breath made up between them. 5

OTHELLO What! Did they never whisper?

EMILIA Never, my lord.

OTHELLO Nor send you out o'th'way?

EMILIA Never.

OTHELLO To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, nor nothing?

EMILIA Never, my lord.

OTHELLO That's strange. 10

EMILIA I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,

Lay down my soul at stake. If you think other,  
Remove your thought; it doth abuse your bosom.

If any wretch have put this in your head,

Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse! 15

For if she be not honest, chaste, and true,

There's no man happy. The purest of their wives

Is foul as slander.

OTHELLO Bid her come hither; go!

*Exit Emilia*

She says enough; yet she's a simple bawd

That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore, 20

A closet lock and key of villainous secrets;

And yet she'll kneel and pray. I have seen her do't.

*Enter DESDEMONA and Emilia.*

DESDEMONA My lord, what is your will?

OTHELLO Pray, chuck, come hither.

Act 4, Scene 2 4.2] *Scena Secunda*. F; not in Q1 3 you] F; and you Q1 8 her gloves; her mask] F; her mask, her gloues Q1 15 heaven] F; heuens Q1 17 their wives] F; her Sex Q1 18 sd] F; after slander in Q1 23 Pray] Q1; Pray you F

## Act 4, Scene 2

12 at stake as the wager.

13 abuse your bosom deceive you.

15 serpent's curse 'Then the Lord God said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life' (Gen. 3.14).

17 happy fortunate.

19 bawd procuress.

20 This i.e. Desdemona.

21 closet...key concealer, locker-up. Usually in Shakespeare 'closet' refers to a room, but here it seems to mean 'chest for papers', as in *Mac.* 5.1.6.

DESDEMONA What is your pleasure?

OTHELLO Let me see your eyes.

Look in my face.

DESDEMONA What horrible fancy's this? 25

OTHELLO [*To Emilia*] Some of your function, mistress:

Leave procreants alone and shut the door;

Cough or cry 'hem' if anybody come.

Your mystery, your mystery! Nay, dispatch!

*Exit Emilia*

DESDEMONA Upon my knees, what doth your speech import? 30

I understand a fury in your words,

But not the words.

OTHELLO Why? What art thou?

DESDEMONA Your wife, my lord; your true and loyal wife.

OTHELLO Come, swear it; damn thyself;

Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves 35

Should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double-damned:

Swear thou art honest.

DESDEMONA Heaven doth truly know it.

OTHELLO Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.

DESDEMONA To whom, my lord? With whom? How am I false?

OTHELLO Ah, Desdemon, away, away, away! 40

DESDEMONA Alas, the heavy day! Why do you weep?

Am I the motive of these tears, my lord?

If haply you my father do suspect

An instrument of this your calling back,

Lay not your blame on me. If you have lost him, 45

I have lost him too.

OTHELLO Had it pleased heaven

To try me with affliction, had they rained

All kind of sores and shames on my bare head,

Steeped me in poverty to the very lips,

26 SD] *Hanmer*; not in F, Q1 29 Nay] Q1; May F 30 knees] Q1; knee F 30 doth] F; does Q1 32 But... words] Q1; not in F 34-7 Come... honest] Q1; as prose in F 39] Q1; To... lord / ... false F 40 Ah] F; O Q1 42 motive] F; occasion Q1 42 these] F; those Q1 45 lost] F; left Q1 46 I] F; Why I Q1 46 lost] F; left Q1 47 they rained] F; he ram'd Q1 48 kind] F; Kindes Q1

26 Some of your function Do your job (as brothel-keeper).

29 mystery trade (of bawd), as in *MM* 4.2.34.

38 false as hell Proverbial phrase (Tilley H398).

43 haply by chance.

46-52 Had it... patience Probably an allusion to Job.

47 they rained Q1's reading 'he ram'd' (= rained) makes one wonder whether 'heaven' was originally 'God'.

Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes, 50  
 I should have found in some place of my soul  
 A drop of patience. But, alas, to make me  
 The fixèd figure for the time of scorn  
 To point his slow unmoving finger at!  
 Yet could I bear that too, well, very well; 55  
 But there where I have garnered up my heart,  
 Where either I must live or bear no life,  
 The fountain from the which my current runs  
 Or else dries up – to be discarded thence  
 Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads 60  
 To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,  
 Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin;  
 Ay, there look grim as hell!

DESDEMONA I hope my noble lord esteems me honest.

OTHELLO O ay: as summer flies are in the shambles, 65  
 That quicken even with blowing. O, thou weed,  
 Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet  
 That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst ne'er been  
 born!

DESDEMONA Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?

OTHELLO Was this fair paper, this most goodly book, 70  
 Made to write 'whore' upon? What committed!  
 Committed? O thou public commoner!

50 utmost] F; not in Q1 51 place] F; part Q1 53 The] F; A Q1 54 unmoving] Q1; and moving F 54 finger]  
 F; fingers Q1 54 at] F; at – oh, oh, Q1 62 thou] F; thy Q1 63 Ay, there] *Theobald*; I heere F, Q1 65 summer]  
 F; summers Q1 66–8] *Capell*; That...weed / ...sweet / ...thee / ...born F; That...blowing / ...fair / ...thee /  
 ...born Q1 66 weed] F; blacke weede Q1 67 Who] F; Why Q1 67 and] F; Thou Q1 68 ne'er] Q1; neuer F  
 71 upon] F; on Q1 72–5] F; not in Q1

53–4 The fixèd... at Othello sees himself as an eternal object of derision, pointed at forever – like the numbers on a clock-face, pointed at by the hour-hand which, though moving, appears to the human eye to be standing still. Compare *Sonnets* 104.9–10: 'yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand, / Steal from his figure, and no pace perceiv'd'.

56 garnered stored.

58–61 The fountain... gender in The vocabulary here is from Prov. 5.15–18: 'Drink the water of thy cistern... Let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.' This Geneva version has a marginal note: 'God blesseth marriage and curseth whoredom.'

58 fountain spring. Compare *Mac.* 2.3.98–9: 'The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood / Is stopp'd.'

60 cistern cesspool.

61 knot and gender copulate and engender.

61 Turn...there Grow pale when that happens.

64 honest chaste.

65 summer flies Compare *Lear* 4.6.112–13: 'the small gilded fly / Does lecher in my sight'.

65 shambles butcher's slaughter-house.

66 quicken...blowing come to life merely with the depositing of larvae.

69 ignorant unknowing, innocent.

72 Committed Committed adultery. Compare *Lear* 3.4.81–2: 'commit not with a man's sworn spouse'.

72 commoner whore (as in *AWW* 5.3.194).

I should make very forges of my cheeks  
 That would to cinders burn up modesty  
 Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed! 75  
 Heaven stops the nose at it, and the moon winks;  
 The bawdy wind, that kisses all it meets,  
 Is hushed within the hollow mine of earth  
 And will not hear it. What committed?  
 Impudent strumpet!

DESDEMONA By heaven, you do me wrong. 80

OTHELLO Are not you a strumpet?

DESDEMONA No, as I am a Christian.

If to preserve this vessel for my lord  
 From any other foul unlawful touch  
 Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.

OTHELLO What, not a whore?

DESDEMONA No, as I shall be saved. 85

OTHELLO Is't possible?

DESDEMONA O, heaven forgive us!

OTHELLO I cry you mercy then:

I took you for that cunning whore of Venice  
 That married with Othello. You, mistress,  
 That have the office opposite to Saint Peter, 90  
 And keeps the gate of hell! You, you, ay, you!

*Enter Emilia.*

We have done our course; there's money for your pains.

I pray you turn the key, and keep our counsel. *Exit*

EMILIA Alas, what does this gentleman conceive?

78 hollow] F; hallow Q1 80 Impudent strumpet] Q1; not in F 83 other] F; hated Q1 87 forgive us] F; forgiveness Q1 87 then] F; not in Q1 91 gate of] F; gates in Q1 91 You...you!] F; I, you, you, you; Q1 91 SD] after 89 in F; after 85 in Q1

76 moon The symbol of chastity.

76 winks closes its eyes (as in *Cym.* 2.4.89).

77-8 The bawdy...earth Acolus and Boreas were believed to live in the caves of mountainous Thrace (*Aeneid* 1. 81-6). Compare *2H6* 3.2.88-9: 'but curs'd the gentle gusts, / And he that loos'd them forth their brazen caves'.

77 bawdy i.e. because it blows promiscuously on everybody; compare *MV* 2.6.16: 'Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind'. Othello sees even the most promiscuous of natural forces being shamed by Desdemona's deed.

78 mine cave.

82 vessel body. Compare 1 Thess. 4.3-5: 'ye should abstain from fornication, That every one of you should know, how to possess his vessel in holiness and honour, And not in the lust of concupiscence'.

87 cry you mercy ask your pardon.

91 keeps...hell Compare Prov. 7.27: 'Her [the harlot's] house is the way unto the grave, which goeth down to the chambers of death.'

92 done our course completed our business (with sexual overtones).

94 conceive imagine.

How do you, madam? How do you, my good lady? 95

DESDEMONA Faith, half-asleep.

EMILIA Good madam, what's the matter with my lord?

DESDEMONA With who?

EMILIA Why, with my lord, madam.

DESDEMONA Who is thy lord?

EMILIA He that is yours, sweet lady. 100

DESDEMONA I have none. Do not talk to me, Emilia.

I cannot weep, nor answers have I none

But what should go by water. Prithee tonight

Lay on my bed my wedding sheets, remember;

And call thy husband hither.

EMILIA Here's a change indeed! *Exit* 105

DESDEMONA 'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet!

How have I been behaved that he might stick

The smallest opinion on my least misuse?

*Enter IAGO and Emilia.*

IAGO What is your pleasure, madam? How is't with you?

DESDEMONA I cannot tell. Those that do teach young babes 110

Do it with gentle means and easy tasks.

He might have chid me so; for, in good faith,

I am a child to chiding.

IAGO What is the matter, lady?

EMILIA Alas, Iago, my lord hath so bewhored her,

Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her 115

As true hearts cannot bear.

DESDEMONA Am I that name, Iago?

IAGO What name, fair lady?

DESDEMONA Such as she said my lord did say I was.

EMILIA He called her whore. A beggar in his drink

97] Q1; Good...madam / ...lord F 100] F; not in Q1 102 answers] F; answer Q1 104 my wedding] F; our wedding Q1 106 very meet] F; very well Q1 108 least misuse] F; greatest abuse Q1 108 SD] F; after 109 in Q1 109] Pope; What...madam / ...you F, Q1 113 to] F; at Q1 116 As] Q1; That F 116 bear] Q1; bear it F 118 said] F; says Q1

96 half-asleep i.e. stunned.

103 go by water be given expression by tears.

Compare *1H4* 3.1.93-4: 'a world of water shed / Upon the parting of your wives and you'; and also 'To write in water' (Tilley W114), a proverbial description of unavailing activity.

106 meet fitting.

107-8 stick...opinion attach the least censure.

Compare *Cor.* 1.1.271: 'Opinion that so sticks on Martius'.

108 least misuse most trivial misbehaviour. Q1's 'greatest abuse' is possible.

113 am a child to chiding have no experience of being upbraided.

115 despite abuse (as in *Cor.* 3.3.139).

Could not have laid such terms upon his callet. 120

IAGO Why did he so?

DESDEMONA I do not know; I am sure I am none such.

IAGO Do not weep, do not weep! Alas the day!

EMILIA Hath she forsook so many noble matches,

Her father, and her country, and her friends, 125

To be called whore? Would it not make one weep?

DESDEMONA It is my wretched fortune.

IAGO

Beshrew him for't!

How comes this trick upon him?

DESDEMONA

Nay, heaven doth know.

EMILIA I will be hanged if some eternal villain,

Some busy and insinuating rogue, 130

Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,

Have not devised this slander; I'll be hanged else.

IAGO Fie, there is no such man; it is impossible.

DESDEMONA If any such there be, heaven pardon him.

EMILIA A halter pardon him and hell gnaw his bones! 135

Why should he call her whore? Who keeps her company?

What place, what time, what form, what likelihood?

The Moor's abused by some most villainous knave,

Some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow.

O heaven, that such companions thou'dst unfold, 140

And put in every honest hand a whip

To lash the rascals naked through the world,

Even from the east to th'west!

IAGO

Speak within door.

EMILIA O fie upon them! Some such squire he was

124 Hath] F; Has Q1 125 country, and] Country? And F; Countrey, all Q1 127-8 Beshrew...him] F; one line in Q1 135-7] Q1; A...him / ...bones / ...whore / ...company / ...time / ...likelihood F 138 most villainous] F; outrageous Q1 140 heaven] Q1; heuens F 142 rascals] F; rascall Q1 143 door] F; dores Q1 144 them] F; him Q1

120 callet slut, drab.

124 Hath...matches Compare Cinthio's source story: 'the Lady's relatives did all they could to make her take another husband' (Bullough, VII, 242).

127 Beshrew Curse.

128 trick delusion (as in *Ant.* 4.2.14).

129 eternal inveterate.

130 busy See 3.3.255 n.

130 insinuating worming into favour, wheedling (as in *1H6* 2.4.35).

131 cogging cheating, deceiving (as in *R3* 1.3.48).

131 cozening deceiving.

135 halter hangman's noose.

137 form appearance.

137 likelihood grounds for such an inference (as in *TGV* 5.2.43).

140 companions rogues (as in *Wiv.* 3.1.120).

140 unfold disclose, expose.

143 within door less loudly, more controlledly.

144 squire fellow.

That turned your wit the seamy side without 145  
 And made you to suspect me with the Moor.

IAGO You are a fool, go to.

DESDEMONA O good Iago,  
 What shall I do to win my lord again?  
 Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,  
 I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel: 150  
 If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love  
 Either in discourse of thought or actual deed;  
 Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense  
 Delighted them in any other form;  
 Or that I do not yet, and ever did, 155  
 And ever will – though he do shake me off  
 To beggarly divorcement – love him dearly,  
 Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much,  
 And his unkindness may defeat my life,  
 But never taint my love. I cannot say 'whore': 160  
 It does abhor me now I speak the word;  
 To do the act that might the addition earn  
 Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.

IAGO I pray you be content; 'tis but his humour.  
 The business of the state does him offence, 165  
 And he does chide with you.

DESDEMONA If 'twere no other –

IAGO It is but so, I warrant.

*[Trumpets sound within.]*

Hark how these instruments summon to supper!  
 The messengers of Venice stay the meat.

147 O good] Q1; Alas F 150–63 Here...make me] F; not in Q1 154 them in] Q2; them: or F 166 And...you] Q1; not in F 167 warrant] F; warrant you Q1 167 SD] Rowe subst.; not in F, Q1 168 summon] F; summon you Q1 169 The messengers] F; And the great Messengers Q1 169 stay the meat] staves the meate F; stay Q1

145 seamy side without wrong side out.

146 suspect me i.e. of adultery.

147 go to be quiet.

147–50 O good...him In Cinthio's source story Desdemona asks the help of the Ensign's wife: 'Because I know that he is very friendly with your husband, and confides in him, I beg you, if you have learned anything from him which you can tell me, that you will not fail to help me' (Bullough, vii, 248).

152 discourse of thought process of thinking. Compare *Ham.* 4.4.36–7: 'He that made us

with such large discourse / Looking before and after'.

153 that if.

154 Delighted them Took delight.

155 yet still.

158 Comfort forswear Let comfort abandon.

159 defeat destroy.

161 abhor Quibble on (1) disgust; (2) make into a whore.

162 addition title.

163 vanity finery.

169 stay the meat wait for their meal.



Go in, and weep not; all things shall be well.

170

*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia*

*Enter RODERIGO.*

How now, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I do not find that thou deal'st justly with me.

IAGO What in the contrary?

RODERIGO Every day thou daff'st me with some device, Iago, and rather, as it seems to me now, keep'st from me all conveniency than suppliest me with the least advantage of hope. I will indeed no longer endure it. Nor am I yet persuaded to put up in peace what already I have foolishly suffered. 175

IAGO Will you hear me, Roderigo?

RODERIGO Faith, I have heard too much; for your words and performances are no kin together. 180

IAGO You charge me most unjustly.

RODERIGO With naught but truth. I have wasted myself out of my means. The jewels you have had from me to deliver to Desdemona would half have corrupted a votarist. You have told me she hath received them, and returned me expectations and comforts of sudden respect and acquaintance, but I find none. 185

IAGO Well, go to; very well.

RODERIGO Very well, go to! I cannot go to, man, nor 'tis not very well. By this hand, I say 'tis very scurvy and begin to find myself fopped in it. 190

IAGO Very well.

RODERIGO I tell you 'tis not very well. I will make myself known to Desdemona. If she will return me my jewels, I will give over my

170 SD.1 *Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia*] F; *Exit women*. Q1 172] Q1; I...find / ...me F 174-9] F; Every...Iago / ...me / ...least / ...it / ...already / ...suffered Q1 174 daff'st] F (daffts); doffest Q1 175 me now,] F; me, thou Q1 180-1] F; Faith...words / ...together Q1 180 Faith] Q1; not in F 180 for] Q1; and F 181 performances] F; performance Q1 183 With...truth] F; not in Q1 183 my] F; not in Q1 184 deliver to] Q1; deliuer F 185 hath] F; has Q1 186 expectations] F; expectation Q1 187 acquaintance] F; acquittance Q1 188 well] F; good Q1 189 nor] F; not in Q1 190 By...scurvy] Q1; Nay I think it is scurvy F 193 tell you] F; say Q1

174 daff'st me dost fob me off.

174 device scheme, trick.

175 conveniency opportunity, advantage.

176 advantage furthering, increase.

177 put up accept, endure. Compare *Tit*.

1.1.432-3: 'be dishonored openly, / And basely put it up without revenge'.

180-1 your words...together Proverbial: 'Great promise small performance' (Tilley P602).

185 votarist nun (sworn to chastity); as in *MM* 1.4.5.

186 comforts encouragements.

187 sudden respect immediate regard. Compare *Cym*. 3.5.134-6: 'She held the very garment of Posthumus in more respect than my noble and natural person.'

187 acquaintance Q1's 'acquittance' (= recompense) is possible, but Roderigo seems to be complaining that he has not even met Desdemona, let alone received her sexual favours.

189 go to have sex. See Partridge, pp. 121-2.

191 fopped duped, cheated.

suit and repent my unlawful solicitation; if not, assure yourself I will seek satisfaction of you. 195

IAGO You have said now?

RODERIGO Ay, and said nothing but what I protest intendment of doing.

IAGO Why, now I see there's mettle in thee, and even from this instant do build on thee a better opinion than ever before. Give me thy hand, Roderigo. Thou hast taken against me a most just exception; but yet I protest I have dealt most directly in thy affair. 200

RODERIGO It hath not appeared. 205

IAGO I grant indeed it hath not appeared; and your suspicion is not without wit and judgement. But, Roderigo, if thou hast that in thee indeed, which I have greater reason to believe now than ever – I mean purpose, courage, and valour – this night show it. If thou the next night following enjoy not Desdemona, take me from this world with treachery, and devise engines for my life. 210

RODERIGO Well, what is it? Is it within reason and compass?

IAGO Sir, there is especial commission come from Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place.

RODERIGO Is that true? Why, then Othello and Desdemona return again to Venice. 215

IAGO O no, he goes into Mauritania and takes away with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be lingered here by some accident; wherein none can be so determinate as the removing of Cassio. 220

RODERIGO How do you mean 'removing' of him?

IAGO Why, by making him incapable of Othello's place – knocking out his brains.

RODERIGO And that you would have me to do?

198 and] F; and I haue Q1 200 instant] F; time Q1 203 exception] F; conception Q1 204 affair] F; affaires Q1 207 in] F; within Q1 210 enjoy] F; enjoyest Q1 212 what is it] F; not in Q1 213 commission] F; command Q1 217 takes] Q1; taketh F 221 of] Q1; not in F

196 seek satisfaction demand repayment (not 'challenge to a duel').

197 You...now? You have spoken your mind then? I take this to be a question because of the nature of Roderigo's reply. Most editors follow Onions's interpretation: 'What you now say is true.'

198 protest intendment aver the intention.

203 exception objection.

203 directly straightforwardly (as in *MV* 4.1.359).

211 engines for plots against (as in *Tit.* 2.1.123).

212 compass range of possibility.

217 Mauritania An ancient kingdom in north Africa which included modern Morocco and part of Algeria – hence, the land of the Moors. See pp. 10–14 above.

218 abode be lingered stay be prolonged.

219 determinate decisive, conclusive.

IAGO Ay, if you dare do yourself a profit and a right. He sups tonight  
 with a harlotry, and thither will I go to him. He knows not yet of  
 his honourable fortune. If you will watch his going thence – which  
 I will fashion to fall out between twelve and one – you may take  
 him at your pleasure. I will be near to second your attempt, and  
 he shall fall between us. Come, stand not amazed at it, but go along  
 with me. I will show you such a necessity in his death that you shall  
 think yourself bound to put it on him. It is now high supper-time  
 and the night grows to waste. About it!

RODERIGO I will hear further reason for this.

IAGO And you shall be satisfied.

*Exeunt*

4.3 *Enter* OTHELLO, LODOVICO, DESDEMONA, EMILIA *and*  
 ATTENDANTS.

LODOVICO I do beseech you, sir, trouble yourself no further.

OTHELLO O, pardon me; 'twill do me good to walk.

LODOVICO Madam, good night. I humbly thank your ladyship.

DESDEMONA Your honour is most welcome.

OTHELLO Will you walk, sir? O, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO Get you to bed on th' instant. I will be returned forthwith.

Dismiss your attendant there. Look't be done.

DESDEMONA I will, my lord.

*Exeunt [Othello, Lodovico and Attendants]*

EMILIA How goes it now? He looks gentler than he did.

DESDEMONA He says he will return incontinent;

He hath commanded me to go to bed

And bade me to dismiss you.

EMILIA Dismiss me?

DESDEMONA It was his bidding; therefore, good Emilia,

225 if] F; and if Q1 225 a right] F; right Q1 226 harlotry] F; harlot Q1 235 SD] F; *Ex. Iag. and Rod. Q1*  
*Act 4, Scene 3 4.3] Scena Terzia. F; not in Q1 0 SD] F; after 4.2.234 in Q1 0 SD LODOVICO, DESDEMONA] F;*  
*Desdemona, Lodovico Q1 2 'twill] F; it shall Q1 8 Dismiss] F; dispatch Q1 9 .SD] Capell subst.; Exeunt. Q1; Exit. F*  
*(both after 8) 12 He] Q1; And F 13 bade] Q1; bid F*

226 harlotry harlot (Q1's reading).

228 fall out occur.

232 high fully, quite.

232 supper-time i.e. the time when the  
 seventeenth-century Englishman ate his main  
 evening meal.

233 grows to waste is passing; but Iago may  
 mean literally that he is wasting time on a night  
 when he has so much to do.

Act 4, Scene 3

11 incontinent at once.

Give me my nightly wearing, and adieu. 15

We must not now displeas him.

EMILIA I would you had never seen him.

DESDEMONA So would not I: my love doth so approve him  
That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns –  
Prithee, unpin me – have grace and favour in them. 20

EMILIA I have laid those sheets you bade me on the bed.

DESDEMONA All's one. Good faith, how foolish are our minds!  
If I do die before thee, prithee shroud me  
In one of those same sheets.

EMILIA Come, come, you talk.

DESDEMONA My mother had a maid called Barbary: 25  
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad  
And did forsake her. She had a song of willow;  
An old thing 'twas but it expressed her fortune,  
And she died singing it. That song tonight  
Will not go from my mind. I have much to do 30  
But to go hang my head all at one side  
And sing it like poor Barbary – prithee, dispatch.

EMILIA Shall I go fetch your nightgown?

DESDEMONA No, unpin me here.

This Lodovico is a proper man.

EMILIA A very handsome man.

DESDEMONA He speaks well. 35

EMILIA I know a lady in Venice would have walked barefoot to Palestine  
for a touch of his nether lip.

DESDEMONA [*Sings*]

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,  
Sing all a green willow;

17 I would] Q1; I, would F 19 his frowns] F; and frownes Q1 20 in them] Q1; not in F 21 those] F; these Q1  
22 faith] Q1; Father F 23 thee] Q1; not in F 24 those] Q1; these F 27 had] F; has Q1 30–50 I have...not next]  
F; not in Q1 38, 52 SD] Desdemona sings Q2; not in F 38 sighing] Q2; singing F

15 nightly wearing night-clothes.

19 stubbornness roughness.

19 checks rebukes (as in *Ant.* 4.4.31).

20 unpin Presumably the fastenings of her dress  
or hair.

22 All's one It doesn't matter, all right.

24 talk talk nonsense (as in *Mac.* 4.2.64).

25 Barbary A form of the name Barbara; but  
ironically resonant in view of the barbarian–  
Venetian polarity at the heart of the play.

26 proved mad turned out to be unfaithful (as  
in *AWW* 5.3.3).

28 fortune fate.

30–1 I have...But It's all I can do not.

31 all at one side i.e. in the traditional pose of  
melancholy.

33 nightgown dressing-gown.

34 proper fine, handsome.

38–54 See supplementary note.

38 sycamore This was the Elizabethan name  
for the fig mulberry. It was not traditionally  
associated with the forsaken in love (except perhaps  
by the punning 'sick-amour'); but it is in a grove  
of sycamore that the love-sick Romeo is found  
wandering by Benvolio (*Rom.* 1.1.121).

39 willow A proverbial emblem for the forsaken

Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,  
Sing willow, willow, willow; 40

The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans;  
Sing willow, willow, willow.

Her salt tears fell from her and softened the stones –  
Lay by these. 45

Sing willow, willow, willow –

Prithee, hie thee; he'll come anon.

Sing all a green willow must be my garland.

Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve –

Nay that's not next. Hark, who is't that knocks? 50

EMILIA It's the wind.

DESDEMONA [*Sings*]

I called my love false love, but what said he then?

Sing willow, willow, willow;

If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men –

So get thee gone; good night. Mine eyes do itch – 55

Does that bode weeping?

EMILIA 'Tis neither here nor there.

DESDEMONA I have heard it said so. O, these men, these men!

Dost thou in conscience think – tell me, Emilia –

That there be women do abuse their husbands

In such gross kind?

EMILIA There be some such, no question. 60

DESDEMONA Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMILIA Why, would not you?

DESDEMONA No, by this heavenly light.

EMILIA Nor I neither by this heavenly light;

I might do't as well i'th'dark.

DESDEMONA Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world? 65

EMILIA The world's a huge thing; it is a great price

For a small vice.

46 Sing...willow] *Sing Willough, &c. Willough, Willough* F 47 hie] high F 50 who is't] F; who's Q1  
52-4 I called...moe men] F; not in Q1 55-6 So...weeping] F; Now...night / ...weeping Q1 55 So] F; Now Q1  
56 Does] Q1; Doth F 57-60 I have...question] F; not in Q1 65 Wouldst] F; Would Q1 65 deed] F; thing Q1  
66-7 The...price / ...vice] Q1; The...thing / ...vice F

lover (Tilley w403). Compare its association with Ophelia (*Ham.* 4.7.166), Viola (*TN* 1.5.268), and Lady Bona (*JH6* 3.3.228).

44 Her salt...stones Compare 'Constant dropping will wear the stone' (Tilley D618).

45 these Presumably some of her jewellery or other accessories.

47 hie thee make haste.

47 anon at once.

54 moe more.

59 abuse deceive.

60 gross kind obscene manner.

62 heavenly light i.e. of the moon.

66 price prize.

- DESDEMONA In troth, I think thou wouldst not.
- EMILIA In troth, I think I should, and undo't when I had done it.  
Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for  
measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any 70  
petty exhibition. But for all the whole world! Ud's pity,  
who would not make her husband a cuckold, to make him a  
monarch? I should venture purgatory for't.
- DESDEMONA Beshrew me, if I would do such a wrong for the whole  
world. 75
- EMILIA Why, the wrong is but a wrong i'th'world; and having the world  
for your labour, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and you might  
quickly make it right.
- DESDEMONA I do not think there is any such woman.
- EMILIA Yes, a dozen; and as many to th'advantage as would store 80  
the world they played for.  
But I do think it is their husbands' faults  
If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties  
And pour our treasures into foreign laps,  
Or else break out in peevish jealousies, 85  
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,  
Or scant our former having in despite –  
Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,  
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know  
Their wives have sense like them: they see, and smell, 90

67 In troth] F; Good troth Q1 68 In troth] F; By my troth Q1 68 it] Q1; not in F 69–70 nor for measures] F; or for measures Q1 70 petticoats] F; or Petticotes Q1 71 petty] F; such Q1 71 all] F; not in Q1 71 Ud's pity] Q1; Why F 82–99 But I do...us so] F; not in Q1

- 68 undo't make it right again.
- 69 joint-ring A finger-ring made in two separable parts, with the joins artistically concealed.
- 70 lawn fine white linen.
- 71 exhibition allowance, gift.
- 71 Ud's God's.
- 73 venture purgatory risk being condemned to purgatory. Emilia sees adultery as an ultimately forgivable sin.
- 80 to th'advantage over and above, in addition (as in *MND* I.I.102).
- 80 store populate.
- 81 played A quibble on (1) gambled, hazarded; (2) copulated.
- 83 duties marital duties, sexual activity in marriage.
- 84 our i.e. which should be ours.
- 84 foreign alien (other than their wives').
- 87 scant reduce.

87 having allowance (as in *Wiv.* 3.2.72); but this, like 'duties', 'pour our treasures', 'laps', probably has sexual overtones.

87 in despite out of spite.

88–99 Why, we...us so Compare Shylock's very similar defence of his desire for revenge in *MV* 3.1.59–72: 'Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food...as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?...And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?...If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute.'

88 galls tempers or spirits to make us feel resentment.

And have their palates both for sweet and sour  
 As husbands have. What is it that they do  
 When they change us for others? Is it sport?  
 I think it is. And doth affection breed it?  
 I think it doth. Is't frailty that thus errs?  
 It is so too. And have not we affections,  
 Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?  
 Then let them use us well; else let them know  
 The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

95

DESDEMONA Good night, good night. God me such uses send,  
 Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend!

100

*Exeunt*5.1 *Enter IAGO and RODERIGO.*

IAGO Here, stand behind this bulk, straight will he come.  
 Wear thy good rapier bare, and put it home.  
 Quick, quick, fear nothing; I'll be at thy elbow.  
 It makes us or it mars us; think on that,  
 And fix most firm thy resolution.

5

RODERIGO Be near at hand; I may miscarry in't.

IAGO Here, at thy hand; be bold, and take thy stand.

*[He retires.]*

RODERIGO I have no great devotion to the deed,  
 And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons.

'Tis but a man gone. Forth my sword! He dies!

10

IAGO [*Aside*] I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense,

100] Q1; Good...night / ...send F 100 God] Q1; Heauen F 100 uses] F; vsage Q1 Act 5, Scene 1  
 5.1] *Actus Quintus. Scena Prima.* F; *Actus. 5. Q1 1] Q1; Here...bark / ...come F 1 bulk] Q1; Barke F 4 on]*

93 sport A quibble on (1) entertainment; (2) copulation.

94 affection passion.

97 sport See 2.1.217 n.

100 uses profitable habits of thought.

101 i.e. Not to learn bad ways from the evil that has befallen me, but to learn good from it.

## Act 5, Scene 1

1 bulk a projecting part of a building. Compare

*Cor.* 2.1.210-11: 'stalls, bulks, windows / Are smother'd up'. For a discussion of where Roderigo concealed himself on the Jacobean public stage, see supplementary note to 5.2.0 SD. For a possible staging of this scene, see illustration 5, p. 26 above.

2 bare drawn, unsheathed.

4 It makes...us Proverbial (Tilley M48).

11 quat contemptible youngster; lit. a pimple or small boil (which can be irritated by rubbing).

11 to the sense to the quick, raw.

And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio,  
 Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,  
 Every way makes my gain. Live Roderigo,  
 He calls me to a restitution large 15  
 Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him  
 As gifts to Desdemona.  
 It must not be. If Cassio do remain,  
 He hath a daily beauty in his life  
 That makes me ugly; and besides, the Moor 20  
 May unfold me to him – there stand I in much peril.  
 No, he must die. But soft, I hear him coming.

*Enter CASSIO.*

RODERIGO I know his gait; 'tis he. Villain, thou diest!

*[He lunges at Cassio.]*

CASSIO That thrust had been mine enemy indeed

But that my coat is better than thou think'st. 25

I will make proof of thine.

*[He wounds Roderigo.]*

RODERIGO

O, I am slain!

*[Iago wounds Cassio in the leg and exit]*

CASSIO I am maimed forever. Help, ho! Murder, murder!

*Enter OTHELLO.*

OTHELLO *[Aside]* The voice of Cassio: Iago keeps his word.

RODERIGO O villain that I am!

OTHELLO *[Aside]* It is even so.

CASSIO O help, ho! Light! A surgeon! 30

OTHELLO *[Aside]* 'Tis he. O brave Iago, honest and just,

12 angry. Now] F; angry now: Q1 14 gain] F; game Q1 16 Of] F; For Q1 19 hath] F; has Q1 21 much] F; not in Q1 22 But soft] conj. Dyce<sup>3</sup>; But so, F; be't so Q1 22 hear] Q1; heard F 23 SD] Rowe subst.; not in F, Q1 24 mine] F; my Q1 25 think'st] Q1; know'st F 26 SD.1 He...Roderigo] Capell subst.; not in F, Q1 26 SD.2 Iago...exit] Theobald subst.; not in F, Q1 27] Q1; I...forever / ...murder F 27 maimed] F; maind Q1 27 Help] F; light Q1 28, 29, 31 SD] not in F, Q1 29 It is] F; Harke tis Q1

14 makes my gain helps me win the game. Q1's reading 'game' merely makes literal the gambling image.

16 bobbed swindled. Compare *Tro.* 3.1.68: 'You shall not bob us out of our melody.'

19 daily beauty regularly demonstrated attractiveness.

21 unfold expose.

25-6 my coat...thine This may mean merely that Cassio's coat is more substantial than Roderigo suspected. However, the reference may be to a

metal-plated or reinforced leather undercoat worn for protection. Hart cites James Shirley, *The Politician* 4.5: 'were you not wounded?...I prepared a privy coat.'

26 I will...thine I will put yours to the test.

27-36 This entry and commentary of Othello is often cut or unnoticed in modern theatre productions. It is possible that at the Globe or Blackfriars he spoke his lines from the upper acting-area. See illustration 5, p. 26 above.

31 brave excellent, noble.



That hast such noble sense of thy friend's wrong!  
 Thou teachest me. Minion, your dear lies dead,  
 And your unblest fate hies. Strumpet, I come!  
 Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted;  
 Thy bed, lust-stained, shall with lust's blood be spotted.

*Exit Othello*

*Enter* LODOVICO *and* GRATIANO.

CASSIO What, ho! No watch? No passage? Murder, murder!  
 GRATIANO 'Tis some mischance; the cry is very direful.  
 CASSIO O, help!  
 LODOVICO Hark! 40  
 RODERIGO O, wretched villain!  
 LODOVICO Two or three groan. It is a heavy night.  
 These may be counterfeits: let's think't unsafe  
 To come in to the cry without more help.  
 RODERIGO Nobody come? Then I shall bleed to death. 45  
 LODOVICO Hark!

*Enter Iago, with a light.*

GRATIANO Here's one comes in his shirt, with light and weapons.  
 IAGO Who's there? Whose noise is this that cries on murder?  
 LODOVICO We do not know.  
 IAGO Did you not hear a cry?  
 CASSIO Here, here; for heaven's sake, help me!  
 IAGO What's the matter? 50  
 GRATIANO This is Othello's ancient, as I take it.  
 LODOVICO The same indeed, a very valiant fellow.  
 IAGO What are you here that cry so grievously?  
 CASSIO Iago? O, I am spoiled, undone by villains!

34 unblest] F; *not in* Q1 34 hies] hies F; hies apace Q1 35 Forth] Q1; For F 36 SD] F; *Ex.* Q1  
 37] Q1; What... passage / ...murder F 38 cry] Q1; voyce F 42 groan] F; grones Q1 42 It is a] Q1; 'Tis F  
 46 SD *Iago, with a light.*] Q1 (*after 45*); *Iago.* F (*after 45*) 47 light] F; lights Q1 48] Q1; Who's there / ...murder F  
 49 We] F; I Q1 49 Did] Q1; Do F 50 heaven's] Q1; heauen F

33 Minion Darling (used contemptuously here to mean 'hussy'); i.e. Desdemona.

34 unblest i.e. because she is damned.

34 hies approaches swiftly.

35 Forth of From out.

36 Thy bed... spotted This is oddly inconsistent with Othello's intention to strangle Desdemona specifically not to shed her blood (see 4.1.192-7; 5.2.3-4).

37 passage passers-by (as in *Err.* 3.1.99).

42 heavy gloomy, dark (as in *Lucrece* 709).

44 come... cry Either (1) draw near to the place the cries came from; or (2) approach the brawling group.

48 cries on shouts out. Compare *Tro.* 5.5.35: 'Crying on Hector'.

54 spoiled ruined, finished.

Give me some help. 55

IAGO O me, lieutenant! What villains have done this?

CASSIO I think that one of them is hereabout  
And cannot make away.

IAGO O, treacherous villains!  
[To Lodovico and Gratiano] What are you there? Come in,  
and give some help.

RODERIGO O, help me here! 60

CASSIO That's one of them.

IAGO O murderous slave! O villain!  
[He stabs Roderigo.]

RODERIGO O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!  
[He faints.]

IAGO Kill men i'th'dark? Where be these bloody thieves?  
How silent is this town! Ho, murder, murder!  
[Lodovico and Gratiano come forward.]

What may you be? Are you of good or evil? 65

LODOVICO As you shall prove us, praise us.

IAGO Signior Lodovico?

LODOVICO He, sir.

IAGO I cry you mercy. Here's Cassio hurt by villains.

GRATIANO Cassio? 70

IAGO How is't, brother?

CASSIO My leg is cut in two.

IAGO Marry, heaven forbid!  
Light, gentlemen. I'll bind it with my shirt.

*Enter* BIANCA.

BIANCA What is the matter, ho? Who is't that cried?

IAGO Who is't that cried? 75

BIANCA O, my dear Cassio, my sweet Cassio!

O, Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

IAGO O notable strumpet! Cassio, may you suspect

Who they should be that have thus mangled you?

CASSIO No. 80

56] Q1; O...lieutenant / ...this F 56 me] F; my Q1 57 that] F; the Q1 59 SD] *Theobald*; not in F, Q1 60 here] Q1; there F 61 SD] *Rowe subst.*; *He thrusts him in.* Q2; not in F, Q1 62 dog!] F; dog, - o, o, o. Q1 62 SD] *Muir*; not in F, Q1 63] Q1; Kill...dark / ...thieves F 63 men] F; him Q1 63 these] F; those Q1 64 SD] *Dover Wilson*; not in F, Q1 76-7] *Capell*; O...dear Cassio / ...Cassio F; one line in Q1 76 my sweet] F; O my sweete Q1 77 O, Cassio,] F; not in Q1 79 have thus] F; thus haue Q1

66 praise value, appraise.

69 I cry you mercy Pardon me.

72 My leg...two In Cinthio's source story this

is literally the case: 'the Ensign...cut the right leg entirely through' (*Bullough*, VII, 249).

79 mangled wounded (as in *Rom.* 4.3.52).

GRATIANO I am sorry to find you thus; I have been to seek you.

IAGO Lend me a garter: so. O for a chair  
To bear him easily hence!

BIANCA Alas, he faints!

O, Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

IAGO Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash

85

To be a party in this injury.

Patience awhile, good Cassio. Come, come,

Lend me a light. Know we this face or no?

Alas, my friend and my dear countryman!

Roderigo? No – yes, sure – O, heaven, Roderigo!

90

GRATIANO What, of Venice?

IAGO Even he, sir; did you know him?

GRATIANO Know him? Ay.

IAGO Signior Gratiano! I cry your gentle pardon.

These bloody accidents must excuse my manners

That so neglected you.

GRATIANO I am glad to see you.

95

IAGO How do you, Cassio? O, a chair, a chair!

GRATIANO Roderigo?

IAGO He, he, 'tis he.

[Enter ATTENDANTS with a chair.]

O, that's well said, the chair!

Some good men bear him carefully from hence.

I'll fetch the general's surgeon. [To Bianca] For you,

mistress,

100

Save you your labour. – He that lies slain here, Cassio,

Was my dear friend. What malice was between you?

CASSIO None in the world, nor do I know the man.

IAGO [To Bianca] What, look you pale? – O, bear him out o'th'air.

[Cassio is carried off; Roderigo's body is removed]

Stay you, good gentlemen. Look you pale, mistress?

105

81] Q1; I...thus / ...you F 82–3 IAGO...hence] F; not in Q1 83–4 Alas...Cassio] one line in F, Q1 86–7] F; one line in Q1 86 be] F; beare Q1 86 party] F; part Q1 86 injury] F; not in Q1 87 Come, come,] F; not in Q1 90 O, heaven] Q1; Yes, 'tis F 93 your] F; you Q1 98 SD] Capell subst.; not in F, Q1 98] Q1; He...he / ...chair F 98 He, he] F; He, Q1 98 the] F; a Q1 99 men] man F, Q1 100 SD, 104 SD.1 To Bianca] Johnson; not in F, Q1 102 between] F; betwixt Q1 104 out o'] Q1; o' F 104 SD.2] Dover Wilson subst. after Capell; not in F, Q1 105 gentlemen] F; Gentlewoman Q1

94 accidents sudden happenings.

95 neglected failed to recognise, ignored.

98 said i.e. done.

101 Save...labour Don't trouble yourself (by attending to Cassio any further).

102 malice ill-will (to cause the quarrel).

104 O, bear...air 'Fresh air is ill for the diseased or wounded man' (Tilley A93).

105 Stay...gentlemen F's reading suggests that Gratiano and Lodovico start to accompany

Do you perceive the gastness of her eye?  
 [To Bianca] Nay, if you stare, we shall hear more anon.  
 Behold her well; I pray you, look upon her.  
 Do you see, gentlemen? Nay, guiltiness  
 Will speak, though tongues were out of use. 110

*Enter EMILIA.*

EMILIA 'Las, what's the matter? What's the matter, husband?

IAGO Cassio hath here been set on in the dark

By Roderigo and fellows that are 'scaped.

He's almost slain and Roderigo dead.

EMILIA Alas, good gentleman! Alas, good Cassio! 115

IAGO This is the fruits of whoring. Prithee, Emilia,

Go know of Cassio where he supped tonight.

[To Bianca] What, do you shake at that?

BIANCA He supped at my house, but I therefore shake not.

IAGO O, did he so? I charge you go with me. 120

EMILIA O, fie upon thee, strumpet!

BIANCA I am no strumpet, but of life as honest

As you that thus abuse me.

EMILIA As I? Foh! Fie upon thee!

IAGO Kind gentlemen, let's go see poor Cassio dressed.

Come, mistress, you must tell's another tale. 125

Emilia, run you to the citadel

And tell my lord and lady what hath happed.

Will you go on afore? [Aside] This is the night

That either makes me, or fordoes me quite.

*Exeunt*

106 gastness] F; ieastures Q1 107 SD] Rowe; not in F, Q1 107 if] F; an Q1 107 stare] F; stirre Q1 107 hear] F; haue Q1 109-10] Q1; Do...speak / ...use F 110 SD] Q1; not in F 111] Q1; Alas...matter / ...husband F 111 'Las] Q1; Alas F 111 what's] Q1; what is F 111 What's] Q1; What is F 112 hath] F; has Q1 114 dead] Q1; quite dead F 116 fruits] F; fruite Q1 116 Prithee] F; pray Q1 118 SD] This edn; not in F, Q1 121 O, fie] F; Fie, fie Q1 123 Foh! Fie] Q1; Fie F 124] Q1; Kind gentlemen / ...dressed F 127 hath] F; has Q1 128 on afore] F; on, I pray, Q1 128 SD] Steevens<sup>2</sup>; not in F, Q1 129 makes] F; markes Q1

Cassio and are stayed by Iago to hear his accusations against Bianca. If Q1's 'Gentlewoman' is correct, it is Bianca who tries to go off with Cassio and is detained by Iago with this sarcastic mode of address. The former is the more dramatically plausible.

106 gastness terror, frightened look.

107 It is not clear what exactly Iago means here. If F is correct: 'Nay, from the look in your eyes we shall have a full confession shortly.' If Q1's 'an you

stir' is right, then Iago has a hold on Bianca, who starts to struggle and is threatened by him.

110 tongues...use men no longer had the power to speak.

117 know learn.

122 honest chaste.

124 dressed i.e. his wound bandaged.

125 you must...tale Proverbial (Tilley T49).

129 fordoes me quite ruins me completely.

5.2 *Enter OTHELLO, with a light, and DESDEMONA in bed.*

OTHELLO It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul:

Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars.

It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,

Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow

And smooth as monumental alabaster –

Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.

Put out the light, and then put out the light:

If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,

I can again thy former light restore,

Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,

Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,

I know not where is that Promethean heat

That can thy light relume. When I have plucked thy rose,

I cannot give it vital growth again;

It needs must wither. I'll smell it on the tree.

*He kisses her.*

O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade

Justice to break her sword! One more, one more!

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee

And love thee after. One more, and this the last.

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep.

But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly –

Act 5, Scene 2 5.2] *Scena Secunda*. F; not in Q1 0 SD] Enter Othello, and Desdemona in her bed. F; Enter Othello with a light. Q1 10 thy light] F; thine Q1 11 cunning'st] F; cunning Q1 13] Q1; That...relume / ...rose F 13 relume] F; returne Q1 13 thy rose] F; the rose Q1 15 needs must] F; must needs Q1 15 it] Q1; thee F 15 SD] Q2; after 19 in Q1; not in F 16 O] F; A Q1 16 dost] F; doth Q1 17 Justice] F; Iustice herselfe Q1 17 sword! One more, one more!] F; sword once more Q1 19 One] F; once Q1 19 this] Q1; that's F

## Act 5, Scene 2

0 SD For a discussion of Jacobean staging, see supplementary note; see also illustration 6, p. 36 above.

1 It is the cause i.e. I must keep in my mind the crime (of adultery). Compare *Lear* 4.6.109–11: 'What was thy cause? Adultery? Thou shalt not die.'

4 that whiter...snow her skin that is whiter than snow (Abbott 419a). Proverbial phrase (Tilley 5591).

5 monumental i.e. like that used for tombs.

6 else she'll...men Othello is attempting to raise his action from being one of personal revenge to one that is for the good of society.

7 i.e. first quench this lamp, and then snuff out the life of Desdemona.

8 flaming minister i.e. the lamp in his hand. Compare Ps. 104.4: 'Which maketh the spirits his messengers, and a flaming fire his ministers'.

11 cunning'st...nature skilfully created product of nature at its most perfect.

12 Promethean heat i.e. the life-giving fire that the Titan Prometheus stole from heaven and gave to men.

13 relume light again.

13 thy rose F's reading is superior to Q1's 'the rose' in view of 16.

17 sword i.e. the symbol of Justice's ability to punish.

21–2 this sorrow's...love Compare Heb. 12.6: 'For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.'

It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

DESDEMONA Who's there? Othello?

OTHELLO Ay, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA Will you come to bed, my lord?

OTHELLO Have you prayed tonight, Desdemon?

DESDEMONA Ay, my lord. 25

OTHELLO If you bethink yourself of any crime

Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace,

Solicit for it straight.

DESDEMONA Alack, my lord, what may you mean by that?

OTHELLO Well, do it, and be brief: I will walk by: 30

I would not kill thy unprepared spirit;

No – heaven forfend! – I would not kill thy soul.

DESDEMONA Talk you of killing?

OTHELLO Ay, I do.

DESDEMONA Then heaven

Have mercy on me!

OTHELLO Amen, with all my heart!

DESDEMONA If you say so, I hope you will not kill me. 35

OTHELLO Hum!

DESDEMONA And yet I fear you, for you're fatal then

When your eyes roll so. Why I should fear I know not,

Since guiltiness I know not, but yet I feel I fear.

OTHELLO Think on thy sins.

DESDEMONA They are loves I bear to you. 40

OTHELLO Ay, and for that thou diest.

DESDEMONA That death's unnatural that kills for loving.

Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?

Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:

These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope 45

They do not point on me.

OTHELLO Peace, and be still!

DESDEMONA I will so. What's the matter?

OTHELLO That handkerchief which I so loved and gave thee,

Thou gav'st to Cassio.

22 where] F; when Q1 22 doth] F; does Q1 29] Q1; Alack...lord / ...that F 29 Alack] F; Alas Q1 32 heaven] Q1; Heavens F 33-4 Then...me] one line in F, Q1 35 so] Q1; not in F 38] Q1; When...so / ...not F 41 Ay] F; not in Q1 45 I hope, I hope] F; I hope Q1 48-9 That...Cassio] Q1; That handkerchief / ...Cassio F

28 Solicit Pray (for forgiveness).

28 straight at once.

40 They are...you An allusion to the sin of loving a human being more than God.

46 point on me presage my future. Compare *Sonnets* 26.9-10: 'Till whatsoever star that guides my moving / Points on me graciously'.

47 matter thing in question (disturbing you).

- DESEMONA No, by my life and soul!  
Send for the man and ask him.
- OTHELLO Sweet soul, take heed. 50  
Take heed of perjury: thou art on thy death-bed.
- DESEMONA Ay, but not yet to die.
- OTHELLO Yes, presently.  
Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin;  
For to deny each article with oath  
Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception 55  
That I do groan withal. Thou art to die.
- DESEMONA Then Lord have mercy on me!
- OTHELLO I say, Amen.
- DESEMONA And have you mercy too! I never did  
Offend you in my life; never loved Cassio  
But with such general warranty of heaven 60  
As I might love. I never gave him token.
- OTHELLO By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in's hand.  
O perjured woman! Thou dost stone my heart,  
And mak'st me call what I intend to do  
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice. 65  
I saw the handkerchief.
- DESEMONA He found it then;  
I never gave it him. Send for him hither;  
Let him confess a truth.
- OTHELLO He hath confessed.
- DESEMONA What, my lord?
- OTHELLO That he hath used thee.
- DESEMONA How? Unlawfully? 70
- OTHELLO Ay.
- DESEMONA He will not say so.
- OTHELLO No, his mouth is stopped:  
Honest Iago hath tane order for't.

49-50 No...him] No...soul / ...him Q1; No...man / ...him F 50-1 Sweet...death-bed] *Capell*; Sweet...  
perjury / ...bed F, Q1 52 Yes] Q1; *not in* F 55 conception] F; conceit Q1 57 Then Lord] Q1; O Heauen F  
58-9] F; And...too / ...Cassio Q1 63 my] F; thy Q1 64 mak'st] makest Q1; makes F 68 Let] F; And let Q1  
68 hath] F; has Q1 70 used thee] F; vds death Q1

52 presently immediately.  
54 article A legal term meaning an item in a formal indictment.  
55 conception A quibble: (1) belief; (2) plan (I have conceived).  
56 groan withal A quibble: (1) am distressed by; (2) am giving birth to.

59 Offend Sin against.  
60 warranty allowance, permission.  
63 stone harden, turn to stone.  
65 sacrifice See 6 n. above.  
70 used copulated with. See Partridge, p. 214.  
73 tane order for arranged (as in *R3* 4.2.52).

- DESDEMONA O, my fear interprets! What, is he dead?  
 OTHELLO Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge 75  
     Had stomach for them all.  
 DESDEMONA Alas, he is betrayed, and I undone.  
 OTHELLO Out, strumpet! Weep'st thou for him to my face?  
 DESDEMONA O banish me, my lord, but kill me not!  
 OTHELLO Down, strumpet! 80  
 DESDEMONA Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight!  
 OTHELLO Nay, if you strive –  
 DESDEMONA But half an hour!  
 OTHELLO                      Being done, there is no pause.  
 DESDEMONA But while I say one prayer!  
 OTHELLO                      It is too late.  
 DESDEMONA O, Lord, Lord, Lord! 85  
     *He smothers her.*  
 EMILIA (*Within*) My lord, my lord! What, ho! My lord, my lord!  
 OTHELLO What noise is this? Not dead? Not yet quite dead?  
     I that am cruel am yet merciful;  
     I would not have thee linger in thy pain.  
     So, so.  
 EMILIA (*Within*) What, ho! My lord, my lord!  
 OTHELLO                      Who's there? 90  
 EMILIA [*Within*] O, good my lord, I would speak a word with you.  
 OTHELLO Yes – 'tis Emilia – by and by. – She's dead.  
     'Tis like she comes to speak of Cassio's death:  
     The noise was high. Ha! No more moving?  
     Still as the grave. Shall she come in? Were't good? 95

74 O] F; *not in* Q1 74 interprets] F; interprets then Q1 75–6] F; Had...lives / ...all Q1 78 Out] F; O Q1 82 if] F; an Q1 83 OTHELLO Being...pause] F; *not in* Q1 85 SD] *Smothers her. F; he stifles her. Q1 (after late in F and Q1)* 85] Q1; *not in* F 86 SD] *at the doore F; calls within Q1* 86] Q1; My...ho / ...lord F 87 noise] F; voyce Q1 89–90 I...pain / ...so] F; *one line in* Q1 90 SD] F; *not in* Q1 91 SD] *Malone; not in* F, Q1 94 high] F; here Q1

75 Had all...lives Proverbial (Tilley H30); compare 3.3.443–4.

76 stomach appetite, capacity.

83 Being done...pause Having thus started to do the deed, I cannot stop.

90 So, so. There was a stage tradition in the eighteenth century of Othello stabbing Desdemona at this point; and critics, supporting the stage business, have called upon medical evidence to prove that victims of suffocation or strangulation do not recover consciousness. Other critics argue that Shakespeare may have been ignorant of such medical

facts or that Desdemona died from shock. In Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (a play obviously written under the influence of *Othello*) the Duchess is strangled and also revives to speak some words (see 4.2.237, 350, 353; ed. J. R. Brown, 1964).

93 like likely that.

94 The noise was high The uproar (created by the attack on Cassio) was loud. Some editors take this to refer to the commotion caused by Desdemona's death.

95 Still as the grave Proverbial (Tilley D135).



I think she stirs again. No. What's best to do?  
 If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife –  
 My wife, my wife! What wife? I have no wife.  
 O insupportable! O heavy hour!  
 Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse  
 Of sun and moon, and that th'affrighted globe  
 Should yawn at alteration.

100

EMILIA [*Within*] I do beseech you  
 That I may speak with you. O, good my lord!

OTHELLO I had forgot thee. O, come in, Emilia.

Soft, by and by. Let me the curtains draw.  
 Where art thou?

105

[*He unlocks the door.*]

What's the matter with thee now?

*Enter* EMILIA.

EMILIA O, my good lord, yonder's foul murders done.

OTHELLO What? Now?

EMILIA But now, my lord.

OTHELLO It is the very error of the moon:

110

She comes more nearer earth than she was wont  
 And makes men mad.

EMILIA Cassio, my lord, hath killed a young Venetian  
 Called Roderigo.

OTHELLO Roderigo killed?  
 And Cassio killed?

EMILIA No, Cassio is not killed.

115

OTHELLO Not Cassio killed! Then murder's out of tune,  
 And sweet revenge grows harsh.

DESDEMONA O, falsely, falsely murdered!

EMILIA O Lord! What cry is that?

OTHELLO That? What?

96 best to do] F; the best Q1 98 What wife?] F; my wife; Q1 102 Should] Q1; Did F 102 SD] *Malone*; not in F, Q1 102-3 I...lord] F; one line in Q1 103 That] F; not in Q1 103 O] F; not in Q1 106 SD.1 *He unlocks the door.*] *Theobald* subst.; not in F, Q1 106 SD.2 *Enter* EMILIA.] F; after 105 in Q1 111 nearer] F; neere the Q1 113-14 Cassio...Roderigo] Q1; Cassio...killed / ...Roderigo F 113 hath] F; Has Q1 114-15 Roderigo...Cassio killed] *Capell*; one line in F, Q1 118 O Lord] Q1; Alas F

102 yawn gape wide (as with an earthquake).

110 error straying off course. See 2.3.163 n.

102 at alteration i.e. with the change in nature brought on by Desdemona's murder.

- EMILIA Out and alas, that was my lady's voice! 120  
 [She draws the bed-curtains.]  
 Help, help, ho, help! O, lady, speak again!  
 Sweet Desdemona, O sweet mistress, speak!
- DESDEMONA A guiltless death I die.
- EMILIA O, who hath done this deed?
- DESDEMONA Nobody; I myself. Farewell. 125  
 Commend me to my kind lord. O farewell! *She dies*
- OTHELLO Why, how should she be murdered?
- EMILIA Alas, who knows?
- OTHELLO You heard her say herself it was not I.
- EMILIA She said so; I must needs report the truth.
- OTHELLO She's like a liar gone to burning hell: 130  
 'Twas I that killed her.
- EMILIA O, the more angel she,  
 And you the blacker devil!
- OTHELLO She turned to folly, and she was a whore.
- EMILIA Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.
- OTHELLO She was false as water.
- EMILIA Thou art rash as fire to say 135  
 That she was false. O, she was heavenly true!
- OTHELLO Cassio did top her: ask thy husband else.  
 O, I were damned beneath all depth in hell  
 But that I did proceed upon just grounds  
 To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all. 140
- EMILIA My husband?
- OTHELLO Thy husband.
- EMILIA That she was false to wedlock?
- OTHELLO Ay, with Cassio. Nay, had she been true,  
 If heaven would make me such another world  
 Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,  
 I'd not have sold her for it.

120 that was] F; it is Q1 120 SD] *Dover Wilson subst.*; not in F, Q1 124 hath] F; has Q1 126 SD] Q1; not in F  
 128 heard] Q1; hear F 129 the] F; a Q1 131-2 O...devil] Q1; prose in F 135-6 Thou...true] F; Thou...fire /  
 ...true Q1 135 art] F; as Q1 142 Nay] Q1; not in F

120 Out Used merely to emphasise 'alas'.  
 133 folly unchastity, lewdness (as in *Tro.*  
 5.2.18).

134 belie slander.

135 false as water Proverbial (Tilley w86).

137 top See 1.1.90 n.

137 else i.e. if you do not believe it; as in *John*  
 4.1.107.

140 extremity final punishment (a legal term).

144 entire...chrysolite pure and perfect  
 topaz. The idea echoes Desdemona's and Emilia's  
 discussion at 4.3.61 ff. and foreshadows the savage  
 at 5.2.342-4 who throws away the pearl.

- EMILIA My husband? 145
- OTHELLO Ay, 'twas he that told me on her first;  
An honest man he is, and hates the slime  
That sticks on filthy deeds.
- EMILIA My husband?
- OTHELLO What needs this iterance, woman? I say thy husband.
- EMILIA O mistress, villainy hath made mocks with love! 150  
My husband say that she was false?
- OTHELLO He, woman;  
I say thy husband. Dost understand the word?  
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.
- EMILIA If he say so, may his pernicious soul  
Rot half a grain a day! He lies to th'heart. 155  
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.
- OTHELLO Ha!
- EMILIA Do thy worst.  
This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven  
Than thou wast worthy her.
- OTHELLO Peace, you were best. 160
- EMILIA Thou hast not half that power to do me harm  
As I have to be hurt. O gull! O dolt!  
As ignorant as dirt. Thou hast done a deed –  
I care not for thy sword – I'll make thee known,  
Though I lost twenty lives. Help! help! ho, help! 165  
The Moor hath killed my mistress. Murder, murder!
- Enter* MONTANO, GRATIANO *and* IAGO.
- MONTANO What is the matter? How now, general?
- EMILIA O, are you come, Iago? You have done well,  
That men must lay their murders on your neck.
- GRATIANO What is the matter? 170
- EMILIA Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man.  
He says thou told'st him that his wife was false.

146 on her] F; *not in* Q1 149] Q1; What... woman / ... husband F 149 iterance] F; iteration Q1 150-3] F; *not in* Q1 151 that] Q2; *not in* F 161 that] F; the Q1 164 known] F; know Q1 165 ho] F; O Q1 166 hath] F; has Q1 166 SD IAGO] F; Iago, *and others.* Q1 169 murders] F; murder Q1 170 SH GRATIANO] F; *All.* Q1

149 iterance repetition.

150 made mocks with made a dupe of, played games with.

155 He lies to th'heart Proverbial (Tilley T268).

160 you were best it would be best for you.

162 to be hurt Either (1) to endure anything you have the power to inflict; (2) a capacity to feel pain on behalf of my mistress.

162 gull dupe (as in *TN* 5.1.343).

I know thou didst not, thou'rt not such a villain.  
 Speak, for my heart is full.

IAGO I told him what I thought, and told no more 175

Than what he found himself was apt and true.

EMILIA But did you ever tell him she was false?

IAGO I did.

EMILIA You told a lie, an odious damnèd lie:

Upon my soul, a lie, a wicked lie! 180

She false with Cassio? Did you say with Cassio?

IAGO With Cassio, mistress. Go to, charm your tongue.

EMILIA I will not charm my tongue; I am bound to speak:

My mistress here lies murdered in her bed.

ALL O, heavens forfend! 185

EMILIA And your reports have set the murder on.

OTHELLO Nay, stare not, masters; it is true indeed.

GRATIANO 'Tis a strange truth.

MONTANO O monstrous act!

EMILIA Villainy, villainy, villainy!

I think upon't, I think – I smell't – O villainy! 190

I thought so then; I'll kill myself for grief.

O villainy, villainy!

IAGO What, are you mad? I charge you get you home.

EMILIA Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak.

'Tis proper I obey him, but not now. 195

Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home.

OTHELLO O! O! O!

*Othello falls on the bed.*

EMILIA Nay, lay thee down and roar,

For thou hast killed the sweetest innocent

That e'er did lift up eye.

OTHELLO [*Standing up.*] O, she was foul!

I scarce did know you, uncle; there lies your niece, 200

Whose breath indeed these hands have newly stopped.

I know this act shows horrible and grim –

175] Q1; I...thought / ...more F 177] Q1; But...him / ...false F 181] Q1; She...Cassio / ...Cassio F  
 182] Q1; With...mistress / ...tongue F 183] Q1; I...tongue / ...speak F 184-92] F; not in Q1  
 187] Q2; Nay...masters / ...indeed F 193] Q1; What...mad / ...home F 197 SD] *Oth. fals on the bed.* Q1; not in F  
 199 SD] *Theobald subst.*; not in F, Q1 202 horrible] F; terrible Q1

176 apt plausible, likely.

182 charm exercise a spell upon (to silence); as  
 in *Shr.* 4.2.58.

183 bound in duty bound.

190-1 I think...so then See 3.3.316-21 and  
 4.2.129-32, where Emilia seems to intuit the truth.

199 lift up eye i.e. to heaven in purity of spirit  
 and prayer.

- GRATIANO Poor Desdemon, I am glad thy father's dead:  
 Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief  
 Shore his old thread in twain. Did he live now, 205  
 This sight would make him do a desperate turn,  
 Yea, curse his better angel from his side  
 And fall to reprobance.
- OTHELLO 'Tis pitiful; but yet Iago knows  
 That she with Cassio hath the act of shame 210  
 A thousand times committed. Cassio confessed it,  
 And she did gratify his amorous works  
 With that recognisance and pledge of love  
 Which I first gave her. I saw it in his hand:  
 It was a handkerchief, an antique token 215  
 My father gave my mother.
- EMILIA O God! O heavenly God!
- IAGO Zounds, hold your peace!
- EMILIA 'Twill out, 'twill out. I peace!  
 No, I will speak as liberal as the north;  
 Let heaven, and men, and devils, let them all,  
 All, all cry shame against me, yet I'll speak. 220
- IAGO Be wise and get you home.
- EMILIA I will not.  
*[Iago draws his sword and threatens Emilia.]*
- GRATIANO Fie,  
 Your sword upon a woman!
- EMILIA O thou dull Moor, that handkerchief thou speak'st of

203] Q1; Poor Desdemon / ... dead F 205 in twain] F; at wane Q1 208 reprobance] F; reprobation Q1 213 that] F; the Q1 216 O God! O heavenly God!] Q1; Oh Heauen! oh heauenly Powres! F 217 Zounds] Q1; Come F 217-18 'Twill...north] F; 'Twill...no / ...air Q1 217 'twill out. I] F; 'twill: I Q1 217 peace] F; hold my peace sir Q1 218 I will speak as] F; I'll be in speaking Q1 218 north] F; ayre Q1 221 SD] *Rowe subst.; not in F, Q1 221-2* Fie...woman] *Capell; one line in F, Q1 223] Q1; O...Moor / ...of F 223 of] F; on Q1*

205 Shore...twain The allusion is to the Parcae, or Fates: Clotho who spun the thread of human life and Atropos who cut it.

206 turn act.

208 to reprobance into a state of damnation.

212 gratify reward.

213 recognisance token.

215-16 an antique...mother This is inconsistent with what Othello has earlier told Desdemona (3.4.51-9). The inconsistency is probably due to an oversight, though some editors have argued that

Othello was deliberately frightening Desdemona on the earlier occasion.

217 'Twill out Compare the phrase 'Murder will out.'

218 liberal as the north As Q1's reading is 'as the air', the meaning is presumably 'as unrestrainedly as the north wind blows', with perhaps also the sense of the 'churlish chiding of the winter's wind' (*AYLI* 2.1.7). Some editors have suggested that Emilia is saying that she will speak with the bluntness that characterises people from the north of England.

I found by fortune and did give my husband,  
 For often, with a solemn earnestness – 225  
 More than indeed belonged to such a trifle –  
 He begged of me to steal it.

IAGO Villainous whore!

EMILIA She give it Cassio! No, alas, I found it  
 And I did give't my husband.

IAGO Filth, thou liest!

EMILIA By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen. 230  
 O murderous coxcomb, what should such a fool  
 Do with so good a wife?

OTHELLO Are there no stones in heaven  
 But what serves for the thunder? Precious villain!

[*Othello runs at Iago; Montano disarms him; Iago stabs Emilia from  
 behind and exit.*]

GRATIANO The woman falls; sure he hath killed his wife.

EMILIA Ay, ay; O, lay me by my mistress' side. 235

GRATIANO He's gone, but his wife's killed.

MONTANO 'Tis a notorious villain. Take you this weapon,  
 Which I have here recovered from the Moor.  
 Come guard the door without; let him not pass,  
 But kill him rather. I'll after the same villain, 240  
 For 'tis a damnèd slave.

*Exeunt Montano and Gratiano*

OTHELLO I am not valiant neither,  
 But every puny whipster gets my sword.  
 But why should honour outlive honesty?  
 Let it go all.

EMILIA What did thy song bode, lady?  
 Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan 245  
 And die in music: [*Sings*] 'Willow, willow, willow.'

228 give] F; gaue Q1 232 wife] F; woman Q1 233] Q1; But...thunder / ...villain F 233 SD] Dyce<sup>2</sup> subst.; *The Moore runs at Iago. Iago kills his wife.* Q1; not in F 233 SD.2 exit] Exit Iago. Q1 (*after 235*); not in F 234] Q1; The...falls / ...wife F 234 hath] F; has Q1 237 you this] F; your Q1 238 here] Q1; not in F 241 SD] Exit Mont. and Gratiano. Q1; Exit. F 244-6 What...willow.] F; not in Q1 246 SD] Dyce; not in F, Q1

226 belonged was appropriate.

231 coxcomb fool; lit. the cap resembling a cock's comb that professional fools wore.

232 stones thunderbolts (to hurl at such a villain). Compare *Cym.* 5.5.240: 'The gods throw stones of sulphur.'

233 Precious An intensifier.

242 whipster whippersnapper (one who is prone to whip out his sword).

243 honour...honesty the reputation for honour outlast the possession of honour itself.

245-6 I will...music Proverbial: 'Like the swan, he sings before his death' (Tilley 51028).

Moor, she was chaste; she loved thee, cruel Moor;  
 So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true;  
 So speaking as I think, I die, I die.

*She dies*

OTHELLO I have another weapon in this chamber;  
 It was a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.  
 O, here it is. – Uncle, I must come forth. 250

GRATIANO (*Within*) If thou attempt it, it will cost thee dear;  
 Thou hast no weapon, and perforce must suffer.

OTHELLO Look in upon me then, and speak with me,  
 Or naked as I am, I will assault thee. 255

[*Enter Gratiano.*]

GRATIANO What is the matter?

OTHELLO Behold, I have a weapon:  
 A better never did itself sustain  
 Upon a soldier's thigh. I have seen the day  
 That with this little arm and this good sword 260  
 I have made my way through more impediments  
 Than twenty times your stop. But, O vain boast!  
 Who can control his fate? 'Tis not so now.  
 Be not afraid, though you do see me weaponed:  
 Here is my journey's end, here is my butt 265  
 And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.  
 Do you go back dismayed? 'Tis a lost fear:  
 Man but a rush against Othello's breast,  
 And he retires. Where should Othello go?

[*He goes to the bed.*]

Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starred wench! 270

249 I die,] Q1; alas, F 249 SD] Q1; not in F 251 was] F; is Q1 251 ice-brook's] Ice brookes F; Isebrookes Q1; Innsbrucks conj. Fortescue 253 SD] Q1; not in F 255 with] F; to Q1 256 SD] *Theobald*; not in F, Q1 262 your] F; you Q1 264–70 Be not... wench] F; not in Q1 269 SD] *Dover Wilson subst.*; not in F, Q1

251 sword of Spain Toledo and Bilbao were noted for the production of fine swords.

251 ice-brook's temper tempered by being plunged into ice-cold water. Spanish rivers, such as the Tagus, being fed by melting snows were considered to be partly responsible for the quality of Spanish blades. Some editors have suggested that Q1's spelling 'Isebrookes' indicates that 'Innsbruck' is intended, because the Austrian town exported fine metal to England during the seventeenth century.

256 naked unarmed (as in *2H6* 3.2.234).

262 your stop the hindrance you constitute (as in *Rom.* 2.2.69).

265 butt target (for archery), goal (as in *H5* 1.2.186).

266 sea-mark beacon or other landmark used by ships to make land (as in *Cor.* 5.3.74).

266 my utmost sail the farthest point of my voyage (of life).

267 lost wasted, idle.

268 Man but a rush Aim only a reed (as if it were a spear).

270 ill-starred ill-fated.

Pale as thy smock! When we shall meet at compt  
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven  
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl,  
Even like thy chastity.

O cursèd, cursèd slave! Whip me, ye devils,  
From the possession of this heavenly sight!  
Blow me about in winds! Roast me in sulphur!  
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!  
O Desdemon! Dead Desdemon! Dead! O! O!

275

*Enter* LODOVICO, *Montano*, CASSIO *in a chair*, Iago *in the charge of*

OFFICERS.

LODOVICO Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?

280

OTHELLO That's he that was Othello: here I am.

LODOVICO Where is that viper? Bring the villain forth.

OTHELLO I look down towards his feet; but that's a fable.

If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.

[*He wounds Iago.*]

LODOVICO Wrench his sword from him.

IAGO I bleed, sir, but not killed. 285

OTHELLO I am not sorry neither; I'd have thee live,  
For in my sense 'tis happiness to die.

LODOVICO O, thou Othello, that wert once so good,  
Fallen in the practice of a damnèd slave,  
What shall be said to thee?

OTHELLO Why, anything: 290

An honourable murderer, if you will;  
For naught did I in hate, but all in honour.

271 compt] F: count Q1 274-5] *Capell*; Even...slave / ...devils F, Q1 275 cursèd.] F: not in Q1 275 ye] F; you Q1 279 Dead Desdemon] F; *Desdemona* Q1 279 O! O!] F; O, o, o. Q1 279 SD] *Enter* Lodouico, Montano, Iago, and Officers, Cassio *in a Chaire*. Q1; *Enter* Lodouico, Cassio, Montano, and Iago, with Officers. F 280 unfortunate] F; infortunate Q1 282] Q1; Where...viper / ...forth F 282 that] F; this Q1 284 that] F; not in Q1 284 SD] *Rowe* subst.; not in F, Q1 285 Wrench] F; Wring Q1 286 live] F, Q1; loue Q1 (*one copy*) 288 wert] Q1; was F 289 damnèd] Q1; cursed F 290 shall] F; should Q1 292 did I] Q1; I did F

271 Pale as thy smock Proverbial (Tilley C446).

271 compt the day of Judgement.

275 slave i.e. himself, not Iago.

276 the possession of being haunted by.

277-8 Blow me...fire Compare Claudio's vision of hell in *MM* 3.1.121-5: 'To bathe in fiery floods... / To be imprison'd in the viewless winds / And blown with restless violence round about / The pendant world'.

278 steep-down precipice-like.

283 his i.e. Iago's.

283 fable i.e. that the Devil has cloven feet; as in the proverb (Tilley D252).

287 in my sense to one who feels like me.

289 in the practice through the machinations (as in *MM* 5.1.107).

289 slave villain.



LODOVICO This wretch hath part confessed his villainy.

Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?

OTHELLO Ay.

CASSIO Dear general, I never gave you cause.

OTHELLO I do believe it, and I ask your pardon.

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil

Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

IAGO Demand me nothing; what you know, you know.

From this time forth I never will speak word.

LODOVICO What! Not to pray?

GRATIANO Torments will ope your lips.

OTHELLO

Well, thou dost best.

LODOVICO Sir, you shall understand what hath befallen,

Which, as I think, you know not. Here is a letter

Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo,

And here another: the one of them imports

The death of Cassio, to be undertook

By Roderigo.

OTHELLO

O villain!

CASSIO

Most heathenish and most gross!

LODOVICO Now here's another discontented paper,

Found in his pocket too; and this, it seems,

Roderigo meant to have sent this damnèd villain,

But that, belike, Iago, in the nick,

Came in and satisfied him.

OTHELLO

O the pernicious caitiff!

How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief

That was my wife's?

CASSIO

I found it in my chamber;

And he himself confessed but even now

That there he dropped it for a special purpose

Which wrought to his desire.

OTHELLO

O fool, fool, fool!

296 never gave] F; did neuer giue Q1 297 your] F; you Q1 298 I] F; not in Q1 304] Q1; Sir / ...befallen F  
308-9 The... Roderigo] F; one line in Q1 313 nick] Q1; interim F 314 the] Q1; thou F 315 that] F; a Q1  
317 but] it but F; it Q1

294 consent in agree to the planning of.

300 what... know Proverbial (Tilley K173).

303 Torments Torture.

309 gross flagrant, monstrous (as in *Lear* 1.3.4).

310 discontented paper letter expressing  
resentment.

313 nick nick of time. F's 'interim' is possible,  
but dramatically less satisfying.

314 Came in Interposed.

314 satisfied him gave him a satisfactory  
explanation.

319 wrought to his desire worked out in  
accordance with his wishes.

- CASSIO There is besides in Roderigo's letter 320  
 How he upbraids Iago, that he made him  
 Brave me upon the watch, whereon it came  
 That I was cast; and even but now he spake –  
 After long seeming dead – Iago hurt him,  
 Iago set him on. 325
- LODOVICO You must forsake this room and go with us.  
 Your power and your command is taken off  
 And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave,  
 If there be any cunning cruelty  
 That can torment him much and hold him long 330  
 It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest  
 Till that the nature of your fault be known  
 To the Venetian state. Come, bring him away.
- OTHELLO Soft you; a word or two before you go.  
 I have done the state some service and they know't: 335  
 No more of that. I pray you, in your letters  
 When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
 Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,  
 Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak  
 Of one that loved not wisely, but too well; 340  
 Of one not easily jealous but, being wrought,  
 Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,  
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away  
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,  
 Albeit unused to the melting mood, 345  
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees

333 him] Q1; not in F 334 before you go] F; not in Q1 338 me as I am] F; them as they are Q1  
 339] Q1; Nor...malice / ...speak F 343 Indian] Q1; Judean F

322 Brave Insult, provoke. Compare 2H6 4.10.36: 'thou wilt brave me with these saucy terms'.

322 whereon it came because of which it happened.

323 cast dismissed.

327 off away.

330 hold him long keep him a long time in dying.

331 rest remain.

334 Soft you Wait a moment.

337 unlucky unfortunate, unhappy.

341 wrought worked upon.

342 Perplexed Desperately troubled, bewildered (as in *Cym.* 3.4.7).

343 base Either 'low in natural rank, or in the scale of creation' (*OED* sv a 8), or 'deep-coloured, dark' (*OED* a 5; and *Tit.* 4.2.71: 'is black so base a hue?').

343 Indian Many editors have adopted this Q1 reading, citing the numerous sixteenth-century references to savages who did not know the value of the precious minerals they possessed. But F's 'Judean' has been just as strongly defended as an allusion either to Herod's rejection of his 'jewel of a wife', Mariamne, in a fit of jealousy, or to Judas's betrayal of Christ. See supplementary note.

344 subdued overcome by emotion.

346-7 Drops tears...gum The reference is to the myrrh tree and probably comes from a

Their medicinable gum. Set you down this;  
 And say besides that in Aleppo once  
 Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk  
 Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
 I took by th' throat the circumcisèd dog  
 And smote him thus.

350

*He stabs himself.*

LODOVICO O bloody period!

GRATIANO All that's spoke is marred!  
 OTHELLO I kissed thee ere I killed thee: no way but this,  
 Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

355

*He [falls on the bed and] dies*

CASSIO This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon,  
 For he was great of heart.

LODOVICO [*To Iago*] O Spartan dog,  
 More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea,  
 Look on the tragic loading of this bed:  
 This is thy work. The object poisons sight;  
 Let it be hid.

360

*[The bed-curtains are drawn.]*

Gratiano, keep the house  
 And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor,  
 For they succeed on you. To you, lord governor,  
 Remains the censure of this hellish villain:

347 medicinable] F; medicinal Q1 352 SD] Q1; not in F 355 SD] *Cam.*; *He dies.* Q1; *Dyes* F 357 SD] *Theobald*;  
 not in F, Q1 359 loading] F; lodging Q1 360] Q1; This...work / ...sight F 361 SD] *Dover Wilson subst.*; not in  
 F, Q1 363 on] F; to Q1

conflation of two passages in Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, 12.14–15. In one of these we are told that 'myrrh and the trees that yield it' are found 'in many quarters of Arabia...they sweat out of themselves a certain liquor called stact, which is very good myrrh'; and in another, describing a product called opobalsamum, the liquor 'issueth out of the wound...which...commeth forth by small drops; and as it thus weepeth, the tears ought to be received in wool'. Compare *The Faerie Queene*, 1, i, 9: 'The Mirrhe sweete-bleeding in the bitter wound'.

348 Aleppo A city in Turkey, where it was a capital crime for a Christian to strike a Turk.

353 period conclusion.

354 I kissed...thee Editors who adopt F's 'Iudean' at 343 take this to be an allusion to Judas's identifying Christ by means of a kiss in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26.48); but see supplementary note.

357 Spartan dog Spartan dogs were, according to Seneca's *Hippolytus* (trans. J. Studley, 1581), 'eager of prey'. Compare *MND* where Theseus boasts of his hounds 'bred out of the Spartan kind' (4.1.119), and Hippolyta talks of Hercules and Cadmus saying 'a bear / With hounds of Sparta' (4.1.112–14).

358 fell fierce, cruel (as in *TN* 1.1.21).

359 loading Q1's 'lodging' meaning 'sight like corn beaten down by a storm' has had some defenders.

360 object spectacle, that which meets the eyes. Compare *Tro.* 3.3.180: 'The present eye praises the present object.'

361 keep remain in.

362 seize upon take legal possession of.

363 succeed on descend to (as in *AWW* 3.7.23).

363 lord governor i.e. Cassio.

364 censure judgement, trial (as in *Cor.* 3.3.46).

The time, the place, the torture, O, enforce it!  
Myself will straight aboard, and to the state  
This heavy act with heavy heart relate.

365

*Exeunt*367 SD| F; *Exeunt omnes.* Q1

366 straight immediately.

367 heavy sorrowful.



## SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

**1.1.10 Off-capped** This F reading has been defended as meaning 'stood cap in hand out of respect' and supported by reference to *Ant.* 2.7.57: 'I have ever held my cap off to thy fortunes', and *Tim.* 4.3.212–13: 'And let his very breath... / Blow off thy cap.' Q1's 'Of-capt' has been equally strongly supported because 'to cap' could mean 'to remove one's hat as a sign of respect', particularly in contemporary academic usage. But the citation from *Cor.* 2.1.68–9, 'You are ambitious for poor knaves' legs and caps', is not really convincing as a parallel use; and White noted that 'capped' could also mean 'with one's hat on', as in Cranmer's *Confutation of Unwritten Verities* (1582): 'And this of Paul, that a man should neither pray nor preach capped, or with his head covered'.

**1.1.21 almost... wife** Although this is based on Italian and English proverbs, most editors have found its exact import obscure. The enormous amount of speculation may be reduced to the following points: (1) that we are intended to believe that Iago has in mind Cassio's long-standing liaison with Bianca who is intent on marrying (see 4.1.105–42); but there is no clear evidence in the play for or against the idea that Cassio knew Bianca before he landed in Cyprus; (2) that Iago is not being specific, but is referring slightly to Cassio's obvious reputation as a ladies' man, who is liable to be snared in marriage by one of his conquests; (3) that the line is parenthetical and (reading 'fellow's' for 'fellow') is early evidence of Iago's own bitter jealousy over Emilia's supposed infidelity with Cassio; (4) that this is one of the many inconsistencies in the presentation of Cassio's character between Acts 1–2 and Acts 3–5, dealt with by N. Allen in his discussion of Shakespeare's treatment of his source in Cinthio (*S.Sur.* 21 (1968), 15). The numerous emendations of 'fair wife' (see Furness, pp. 5–10) are testimony to the inventiveness of Shakespeare scholars.

**1.3.259–60 to comply... satisfaction** All editors agree that some emendation of F's and Q1's 'my defunct' is needed. The conjectures are legion and are based on the following ambiguities in word usage: (1) 'young affects' can mean 'emotions typical of young people', or 'feelings which strongly influence young people', or 'newly-felt emotions (in me)'; (2) 'proper' can mean 'own', or 'peculiar', or 'legitimate', or 'personal'; (3) 'comply with heat' can mean 'satisfy eagerly', or 'gratify my sexual passion'. If 'defunct' is allowed to stand and 'my' is emended to 'me', then it is possible to see 'the young affects in me defunct' as a parenthesis in the sentence 'to comply with heat... and proper satisfaction'. If 'defunct' is emended to 'distinct' (= individual) or 'disjunct' (= separate) or 'defenced' (= guarded) or 'defect' (= defective), then the word is an adjective in apposition to 'proper' and describing 'satisfaction'.

**1.3.265–6 seel... instruments** This reading from F conveys a quite different metaphorical picture from Q1's 'foyles... / My speculatiue and actiue instruments'. The former depicts Cupid seeling with wantonness the eyes of Othello (like a young hawk being blinded) so that the powers of perception necessary to his position of commander will be useless. The latter has Cupid making ineffective Othello's thoughts and senses. Either of these readings is acceptable; but most editors make some amalgam of the two texts unnecessarily.

**2.1.65 tire the ingener** The phrase has puzzled most editors, and F's spelling 'Ingeniuer' has encouraged the widest of speculations: e.g. 'ingenuous virtue' (Steevens), 'ingene ever' (Malone). In general, opinion is divided between two interpretations, both of which involve the interpretation of 'ingener' as a noun signifying 'artist': (1) dress or decorate the imagination of the creative artist; (2) weary or exceed the abilities of the artist attempting to praise her. Q1's 'beare all excellency' is clear, but is usually considered banal and un-Shakespearean.

**2.1.284 trace** I take the meaning of this F reading to be 'follow, track' (*OED* sv *v*<sup>1</sup> 5) with 'for' in the sense of 'because of'. However, most editors find this interpretation unacceptable. Ridley, committed to Q1 as a copy-text, suggests that 'crush' may have 'something like the sense of "crowding" a horse at a fence – which is just what Iago is trying to do' and cites in support *2H4* 4.2.33–4: 'The time misorder'd

doth... / Crowd us and crush us to this monstrous form.' By far the most common emendation is Steevens's 'trash' (= check by weights or a cord), with Walker (NS) adopting Bailey's variant of 'leash'. Yet the meaning thus produced does not fit Iago's line of thought: while habitually he wants to slow down Roderigo's pursuit of Desdemona, here he clearly wishes to incite the now-disillusioned lover to further action. Hulme (pp. 254-7) suggests a different meaning of F's 'trace', arguing that the allusion is to 'hunger-trace', a term applied to the loss of feathers in a young hawk which has been too severely starved during training.

**2.3.59-63 And let me the cannikin clink** Hart cites a number of contemporary drinking songs in which cannikins and clinking figure largely, but no text or music of any original of Iago's song have come to light. Various tunes have been unearthed which fit the words well: W. Chappell set the words to a ballad air called 'Wigmore's Galliard' (*Popular Music of the Olden Time*, 1855-9, 1, 190); F. W. Sternfeld thinks the lyrics best fit a tune 'Joan Sanderson' or 'Cushion Dance' of which he prefers the version in Playford's *Dancing Master* (1686) (*Music in Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1963, pp. 63, 145-6); and D. C. Greer suggests the use of the tune 'Soldier's Life', which appeared in the 1651 edition of *Dancing Master* (*Music and Letters* 43 (1962), 304-19).

**2.3.76-83 King Stephen was a worthy peer** This song is a version of the seventh stanza of a well-known Scottish ballad called 'Bell my Wife' or 'Tak your auld cloak about thee', of which the full text can be found in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 1765, II, no. 7, and A. Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany*, 1730, p. 113. No sixteenth-century musical setting is known. L. Elson (*Shakespeare in Music*, 1901, pp. 202-3) and P. Seng ('The Dramatic Function of the Songs in Shakespeare's Plays', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1955, p. 481) chose an old Scottish tune in J. Johnson's *The Scottish National Museum*, 1839, II, 258 ff., as the best setting; but F. W. Sternfeld notes that the tune was first printed in J. Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, 1750-60, II, 29, and that a scoring for voice and keyboard accompaniment was published in R. Bremner's *Thirty Scots Songs, for Voice and Harpsicord*, 1757, 1, 14 (*Music in Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1963, pp. 146-50).

**3.3.124-5 They're... rule** There is no agreement about the meaning of this passage. Q1's 'denotements' was defended by Malone, and adopted by Ridley, as meaning 'indications, or recoveries, not openly revealed, but involuntarily working from the heart, which cannot rule and suppress its feelings'. This, of course, necessitates also taking 'passion' as the object rather than the subject of 'rule'. F's 'dilations' is not elsewhere used by Shakespeare, but is often taken to be a Latinate usage meaning 'stops, pauses' of the kind that men of phlegmatic constitutions, who are not governed by their passions, cannot prevent occurring. Walker (NS) suggests that the word also meant 'dilations', a word used in physiology to describe the expansions of the arteries of the heart. Johnson's emendation 'delations' (= secret accusations) is the most commonly adopted reading, despite the facts that the evidence for such a usage in Shakespeare's time is non-existent, and that Iago's pauses could hardly be described accurately as accusations. I believe the lines mean: 'These stops are the involuntary swellings of the heart in a just man who is not normally a slave of his passions.'

**3.3.168-9 mock... feeds on** This has occasioned an enormous amount of commentary (see Furness, pp. 175-80). Theobald's conjecture of 'make' for 'mock' makes the lines mean 'jealous people feed on the suspicions that they themselves have created'. Other editors are divided between the ideas that (1) jealousy feeds on love which it plays with and torments; (2) jealousy mockingly feeds on the heart of the man who is its victim; (3) the victim himself produces the unreal groundless suspicions which are the food that sustains jealousy.

**3.3.430 shrewd doubt** There is no certainty about the meaning of 'shrewd' here. Shakespeare uses it elsewhere in various ways: (1) bitter, piercing, grievous (as in *MV* 3.2.243); (2) sharp, critically penetrating (as in *Tro.* 1.2.190 and *R3* 2.4.35); (3) telling, effective (as in *AWW* 3.5.68). While any of these meanings is possible, in view of Othello's mental state at this point the first of them appears the most likely.

**3.3.469-70 to obey... ever** Most editors have found difficulty with the meaning of 'remorse' here; and many have attempted a solution by introducing a negative of some kind: e.g. 'Not to obey' (Pope), 'Nor to obey' (Theobald), 'without remorse' (Dover Wilson). Schmidt glosses the word as 'compunction of conscience' and Onions as 'solemn obligation', but Shakespeare nowhere else uses the word in these senses. I find no difficulty in accepting the usual Shakespearean meaning of 'pity' with Iago characteristically linking it paradoxically with 'bloody business'.

**4.3.38–54 The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree** This is a version of a song well-known before Shakespeare used it and often quoted in earlier plays and poems. The fullest texts of the original can be found in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 1765, 1, 199–203, and *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. W. Chappell, 1888, 1, 171. For his version Shakespeare changed the sex of the singer and drew mainly on stanzas 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 11 of the original. There are three contemporary musical settings of the song in British Library Add. MS. 15117 (1616 or earlier), the Lodge Book, Folger Library (early 1570s), and the Dallis Book, Trinity College, Dublin (c. 1583). For detailed discussions of the texts and musical settings, see F. W. Sternfeld, *Music in Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1963, pp. 23–52, and J. H. Long, *Shakespeare's Use of Music*, 1971, pp. 153–61.

**5.2.0 SD Enter... in bed** There is no external evidence of how this scene was staged at either the Globe or Blackfriars Theatres. During the last century and at the beginning of this one, it was believed that the scene was played perhaps on an upper acting-area or, more likely, with a bed placed in an inner stage (i.e. an elaborate recessed curtained space set into the tiring-house façade at the rear of the stage). Recent scholars, however, have thrown doubt on the very existence of an inner stage, and have argued that for the climactic scene of the play to be acted without employing the main playing-area is a patent absurdity. There have been two main modern theories about how the scene was managed. L. J. Ross (*SQ* 12 (1961), 359–70) suggests that a curtained fit-up booth or pavilion, constructed before the tiring-house façade and projecting into the main acting-area, was used, this containing the bed which could be concealed when the curtains were drawn (as is ordered at 5.2.361). Moreover, this structure could also serve (1) as the 'Bulke' (Q1) behind which Iago orders Roderigo to conceal himself at 5.1.1, this word meaning in the seventeenth century literally 'a structure projecting from the front of another building'; (2) for the 'Brothel Scene' (4.2); (3) for Emilia and Desdemona to move towards for the 'Willow Scene' after the exit of Othello, Lodovico and Attendants at 4.3.10; and (4) for the opening 'discovery' of the Senate in 1.3 where the Q1 SD reads *Enter Duke and Senators, set at a Table with lights*. R. Hosley (*SQ* 14 (1963), 57–65) takes exception to this theory on the evidence he deduces from an examination of twenty-three bed scenes in plays produced between 1594 and 1642 by the Lord Chamberlain's Men or the King's Men (as the Company was known after 1603). While admitting that discovery scenes were occasionally effected at the Globe Theatre in a curtained doorway of the tiring-house façade, he believes that in *Othello* 'the bed with Desdemona lying in it is "thrust out" of the tiring-house by stage-keepers or attendant players; the bed curtains are manipulated as called for by the dialogue; and when Lodovico says, "Let it be hid" the bed, on which are now lying the bodies of Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello, is "drawn in" to the tiring-house through one of its doors' (p. 65). Hosley discounts Ross's argument for the necessity of a 'Bulke' at 5.1.1 by pointing out that F reads here 'Barke' (i.e. balke or piece of timber) which could easily refer to one of the posts supporting the stage-cover; and further suggests that the Senate scene in 1.3 is not a 'discovery' at all because *set at a Table* could equally well mean 'be seated at a table' after entrance has been made. Both of these methods of staging are clearly possible, and we do know that at least for the performance of the play at Oxford in 1610 (see p. 38 above) the bed was near enough to the audience for people to be moved by the expressions on the face of the boy actor who played Desdemona. It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that the scene was managed differently at the Globe and Blackfriars – a difference perhaps reflected in the 'Bulke/Barke' readings of Q1 and F. See illustrations 4, 5 and 6, pp. 19, 26, and 36 above.

**5.2.343 base Indian** There were innumerable sixteenth-century travellers' tales about savages not knowing the value of the minerals they possessed, although no passage is known that contains the precise terms used in Othello's lines. Pliny discusses Indians ignorantly bartering pearls (34.17); Thomas Nashe has three of the elements in *Pierce Penniless* (1594): 'all artists for the most part are base-minded like the Indians, that have store of gold and precious stones at command, yet are ignorant of their value' (*Works*, ed. R. B. McKerrow, 1, 241); and George Gascoigne's *The Steel Glass* (1575) links pearls and Moors: 'How live the Moors that spurn at glistening pearl, / And scorn the costs, which we do hold so dear?' The adjective 'base', which troubles supporters of F's reading 'Iudean', can mean either 'low in natural rank, or in the scale of creation' (*OED* sv a 8), or 'deep-coloured, dark' (*OED* a 5). The arguments for F's 'Iudean' being an allusion to Judas's betrayal of Christ are: (1) the use of the definite article indicates a specific person; (2) Judas was the only one of the disciples who was a Judean, with 'Iscariot' being linked in the Geneva Bible with 'the tribe of Judah'; (3) the kiss associated with Judas's identification in Gethsemane



and with Othello's murder of Desdemona; (4) the obvious Biblical associations of 'pearl'; (5) Othello's and Judas's self-inflicted punishments; (6) 'base' must mean 'vile'; (7) the word 'tribe' is more appropriate for Judas than for an Indian. There seems to me to be little substance in any of these. Othello is lamenting his ignorance, stupidity, gullibility and descent to savagery, none of which is applicable to Judas. The kiss Othello gives Desdemona is hardly a sign of betrayal so much as an instinctive sexual response at odds with his mental conviction of her guilt. 'Base' does not have to mean 'vile' (see above). 'Tribe' is not always Biblical; compare Iago's lines at 3.3.177-8: 'the souls of all my tribe defend / From jealousy'. The suggestion that F's reading is a reference to the story of Herod and Mariamne is not supported by sufficient parallels to warrant much credence.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

*Othello* is a play that has come down to us in two forms: that found in the quarto (Q1) published in 1622 and that included in the First Folio (F) of 1623. While either of these texts could be produced in the theatre and would be accepted by the average playgoer as a stage version of Shakespeare's drama, there are striking differences between them, including an extra hundred and sixty lines or so in F, some other lines and phrases that appear only in Q1, some fifty-three oaths only found in Q1, over a thousand variations in vocabulary, phrasing and stage directions between the two texts, and a wide range of variants in spelling and punctuation. There is no generally accepted scholarly opinion about the exact relationship between the two nor about the degree of accuracy with which either reproduces the dramatist's own manuscript original.

The analysis of the printing-house processes that lie behind the making of Q1 and F is necessarily technical and complicated, and that of the copy from which the texts were set up is inescapably speculative. Subjective judgements play a necessary part in the ordering of the surviving fragments of evidence. It is possible, however, to look closely at each text in turn, to focus attention on the crucial differences between them, and to outline, in relation to the discerned facts, an acceptable editorial procedure.

### The 1622 quarto

Thomas Walkley entered the play in the Stationers' Register on 6 October 1621 and the next year published his quarto, which he had printed in the shop of Nicholas Okes, with the following title page:

THE / Tragœdy of Othello, / The Moore of Venice. / *As it hath beene diuerse times acted at the / Globe, and at the Black-Friers, by / his Maiesties Seruants. / Written by VVilliam Shakespeare.* / [Device: McKerrow 316] / LONDON, / Printed by N.O. for *Thomas Walkley*, and are to be sold at his / shop, at the Eagle and Child, in Brittons Bursse. / 1622.

This publication date makes it the latest of all the Shakespeare quartos. But although it antedated the appearance of the play in F by only a year, there is no evidence that Walkley was behaving piratically; *Othello* was but one of several plays in the repertory of the King's Men that he published about this time without challenge from the company, the others being Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* (1619), *Philaster* (1620) and *Thierry and Theodoret* (1621). His Stationers' Register entry is perfectly regular and was apparently unaffected by the order in the Stationers' Court-Book on 3 May 1619 requiring that no play belonging to the King's Men was to be printed without the company's consent. He was able to transfer his copyright on 1 March 1628 to Richard Hawkins, who published a second quarto, which

incorporated features of F, in 1630. Moreover, it is noticeable that Jaggard and Blount's block entry for F in the Stationers' Register on 8 November 1623 omits *Othello* along with the other plays that had earlier appeared in quarto format. According to Hinman's<sup>1</sup> timetable for the printing of F, Walkley's entry must have been made and his quarto in all probability issued before the type-setting for F had been started. All the evidence therefore confirms that his title to the play was secure. Obviously Walkley's permission to include *Othello* in F must have been obtained, but the details of the arrangement cannot now be known. The short preface in Q1, 'The Stationer to the Reader', conveys only his consciousness of being the first to give the play to the reading public, though the mere fact of its inclusion may be interpreted as a public assertion of his copyright:

*To set forth a booke without an Epistle, were like to the old English prouerbe, A blew coat without a badge, & the Author being dead, I thought good to take that piece of worke vpon mee: To commend it, I will not, for that which is good, I hope euery man will commend, without intreaty: and I am the bolder, because the Authors name is sufficient to vent his worke. Thus leauing euery one to the liberty of iudgement: I haue ventered to print this Play, and leaue it to the generall censure.*

Yours,

Thomas VValkley.

Q1 exists in nineteen copies, all of which are to some degree defective. Bibliographical analysis of these<sup>2</sup> indicates that Okes printed them using two skeleton-formes; and as the thirty-eight press-variants they contain appear on only one forme of each sheet affected, it is probable that the pressman followed the systematic order of work standard in two-skeleton books of the period: that is, a proof-sheet is pulled from the uncorrected forme, printing is continued from this forme while the proof is being corrected, the forme is corrected from the amended proof, a proof-sheet is pulled from the second yet-uncorrected forme, the printing-run from the now-corrected first forme is completed, the sheet is perfected from the corrected second forme.

The press-variants, which appear overwhelmingly in the stint of Compositor Y, also suggest that the stop-press correction done was carried out merely to eliminate obvious errors and without reference to the manuscript copy. However, the corrections made on the inner forme of Sheet 1 would perhaps have necessitated some collation with the manuscript, and there was probably more care exercised by the corrector from this point to the end of the play.

The type for Q1 was set by three compositors,<sup>3</sup> with X setting A–F4<sup>r</sup>, Y taking over the composition at Iago's entrance (3.1.27) on F4<sup>v</sup> (or perhaps at the top of F4<sup>v</sup>) and continuing to the end of L4<sup>v</sup>, and Z setting Sheets M and N. The persuasive evidence for this division consists of the three workmen's characteristic and distinctive practices in the use of two-, three- or four-hyphen dashes, the kinds of abbreviations of proper names in entrance and exit stage directions, the methods of setting short speeches as a single line of type or on separate lines, the distribution of descriptive and

<sup>1</sup> Charlton Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, 1963, 1, 289.

<sup>2</sup> See Charlton Hinman (ed.), *Othello 1622*, Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles No. 16, 1975, pp. v–xvii; and M. T. Jones, 'Press-variants and proofreading in the first quarto of *Othello* (1622)', *SB* 27 (1974), 177–84.

<sup>3</sup> See E. A. J. Honigmann, *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text*, 1965, pp. 100 ff.

imperative indications of stage action, the kinds of punctuation used in the act-divisions, the centring of first speech headings in new scenes, the variations in signatures and page-numbers, and the spread of variant spellings of frequently-used words.

The nature of the manuscript copy from which Okes set type is the subject of continuing debate. For many years perhaps the most widely-accepted theory was that of Alice Walker.<sup>1</sup> She argued that behind Q1 lay a manuscript of theatrical origin, possibly an early promptbook, that had been cut for acting purposes, and recopied by a scribe familiar with the play in performance, his memory of which he relied upon too frequently and so produced a contaminated version of the play. Her hypothesis rests on the discrimination of three kinds of error: (1) passages cut by the actors for practical purposes and therefore omitted from Q1 – for example, the absence of the Willow Song in 4.3 she saw as being due to the fact that the boy playing the part of Desdemona had no singing voice; (2) errors caused by compositorial carelessness such as eye-skip during the type-setting (for example, at 3.4.7–8; 4.2.72–5, 100; 4.3.57–60; 5.2.150–3); (3) ‘vulgarisations’ of Shakespeare’s text, owed to misremembering, including Q1’s ‘vtmost pleasure’ for F’s ‘very quality’ (1.3.247); ‘concerne’ for ‘import’ (1.3.279); ‘know’ for ‘warrant’ (3.3.3); ‘denotements’ for ‘dilations’ (3.3.124); ‘duty’ for ‘office’ (3.4.107); ‘her Sex’ for ‘their wiuies’ (4.2.17).

Other scholars, such as W. W. Greg and M. R. Ridley,<sup>2</sup> differed from Walker only in believing that the copy for Q1 was a transcript of rather confused and illegible foul papers, and that its errors and vulgarisations are substitutions of the kind often made by a transcriber carrying too many words in his head, which means that there is no need to postulate a book-keeper scribe contaminating the text from his memory of the play in performance.

A number of objections may be made to Walker’s view of Q1. To begin with, her belief that the cuts in Q1 were motivated by theatrical considerations can be discounted. Nevill Coghill<sup>3</sup> has demonstrated that the playing-time saved by these ‘cuts’ is about ten minutes, and that if a shortened acting version was the objective then numerous other cuts could have been made without severe damage to the performance – for example, the scene with the Clown and the Musicians (3.1) which is frequently dropped in modern productions.

Furthermore, Walker’s case rests upon the assumption that a single compositor set the play for Okes from a manuscript prepared by a single contaminating scribe. As we have seen, Honigmann’s evidence makes it unlikely that only one man set the type for Q1; and he has also demonstrated that the copy was probably a manuscript produced by two scribes working hurriedly and simultaneously. Scribe A invariably placed his stage directions in the margin, resulting in extensive turn-over in the printed text (see fig. 1). Scribe A’s preferred spellings are ‘though’, ‘bin’, ‘ha’, ‘I’le’, ‘Casfio’, ‘them’. Scribe B always centred his stage directions on his pages. Scribe B favoured the forms ‘tho’, ‘beene’, ‘haue/has/hath’, ‘I’le/Ile/ile’, ‘Caffio’, ‘em’.

<sup>1</sup> Alice Walker in ‘The 1622 quarto and the First Folio text of *Othello*’, *S.Sur.* 5 (1952), 16–24; *Textual Problems of the First Folio*, 1953, pp. 138–61; and in NS, pp. 121–35.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio*, 1955, pp. 357–74; M. R. Ridley (ed.), *Othello*, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> Nevill Coghill, *Shakespeare’s Professional Skills*, 1964, pp. 145–53, 164–202.

The very Elements of this warlike Isle,  
 Haue I to night flustred with flowing cups,  
 And the watch too: now mongst this flocke of drunkards,  
 I am to put our *Cassio* in some action,  
 That may offend the Isle; *Enter Montanio, Cassio,*  
 But here they come: *and others.*  
 If consequence doe but approoue my dreame,  
 My boate sailes freely, both with winde and streame.  
*Cas.* Fore God they haue giuen me a rouse already.  
*Mon.* Good faith a little one, not past a pint.

Fig. 1 Signature E4 of Q1 (SD setting by Compositor A)

These characteristics cannot be attributed to the compositors as they are spread throughout the text in a pattern which does not coincide with the printing-house stints.

What then can be deduced about the copy from which Q1 was printed? The nature and number of errors in the printed text indicate a hastily-prepared and badly-written manuscript; for many of the compositors' mistakes are due to misreading of the Secretary hand, a fact underlined by some of the proof-reader's recoveries: for example, 'Conuinced' from 'Coniured' (4.1.28); 'vnsuting' from 'vnfitting' (4.1.75); 'cunning' from 'cunuing' (4.1.87). Okes's men also were careless and introduced their own kinds of error as well as changing words in accordance with their personal predilections. Yet despite these obstructions to accurate transmission of the text, there remains some features which suggest that Shakespeare's foul papers lay behind Q1.

Evidence of authorial manuscript can be found in the orthography of the Q1 text and in its stage directions. Both scribes and compositors tolerated to some extent certain characteristic Shakespearean spellings: 1.2.70 'gardage' (compare *Ham.* 3.4.104; *MV* 2.2.155; *TC* (Q) 4.5.253); 1.3.287 'Aduē' (*Rom.* 2.2.136; *LLL* 1.2.181, 5.2.626); 3.3.146 'ghesse' (*Ado* 1.1.110; *MM* 4.4.7; *WT* 1.2.403); 3.3.371 'accumilate' (*Sonnets* 117.10); 3.4.66 'Sybell' (*Tit.* 4.1.105; *Shr.* 1.2.70); 5.2.314 'catieffe' (*Rom.* 5.1.52);<sup>1</sup> and the apostrophic usages 't'were, t'will, T'would, i'st, bit'h'. Doubt has rightly been cast in recent years on the practice of automatically attributing one kind of stage direction to one kind of copy, but collectively Q1's directions give the impression of being authorial, the sort a dramatist might well write into his play to assist his company to visualise its production. For example, the two entrances of Brabantio in 1.1 are evocative visually – Brabantio *at a window*. (82) and *Enter Brabantio in his night gowne, and seruants with Torches*. (158) – as is the scene at the opening of 1.3: *Enter Duke and Senators, set at a Table with lights and Attendants*. Othello's kissing of Desdemona on his arrival in Cyprus is duly noted at 2.1.189. At key points of the action all the important stage movements are made explicit. During the drunken brawl in 2.3 we find *Helpe, helpe, within*. (127); *Enter Cassio, driuing in*

<sup>1</sup> For other examples see Honigmann, *Stability of Shakespeare's Text*.

Roderigo. (127); *they fight.* (137); *A bell rung:* (141); *Enter Othello, and Gentlemen with weapons.* (144); and in the climax of the final scene (5.2) the stage directions specify stage business that cannot accurately be inferred from the spoken text: *Enter Othello with a light.* (o SD); *kisses her.* (15); *he stifles her.* (85); *Emillia calls within.* (86); *Oth. fals on the bed.* (197); *The Moore runnes at Iago. Iago kils his wife.* (233); *she dies.* (249); *Cassio in a Chaire.* (279); *He stabs himselfe.* (352).

In addition to such visualising stage directions, there are a number of unspecific entrances and exits of the kind that are also indicative of authorial copy not yet prepared for the playhouse – for example, in 1.3 *Exit two or three.* (121); ...*and the rest* (169). And there is the uncertainty about the rank and role of Montano which could presumably have originated only with the author. At his first appearance Q1 directs *Enter Montanio, Governor of Cypres* (2.1.0 SD), but neither Cassio nor Othello treats him as the former governor when they land on the island. This looks like evidence of first and second authorial thoughts comparable with the confusion about Viola's singing role in *Twelfth Night*<sup>1</sup> or the appearance of non-speaking 'ghost' characters in texts printed from Shakespeare's own papers (for example, the mute wife of Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing*).<sup>2</sup>

### The 1623 Folio

*Othello* appears as the ninth play in the Tragedies section of the Folio and is one of the plays that is furnished with a dramatis personae on the bottom part of the final page. It runs from signature ss3<sup>v</sup> (page 310) to vv6<sup>r</sup> (page 339). Compositor E set ss3<sup>v</sup>–6<sup>r</sup> and Compositor B was responsible for ss6<sup>v</sup>–vv6<sup>r</sup>. The normal order of composition by formes in F, as demonstrated by Hinman,<sup>3</sup> was followed in the case of *Othello*, the setting of a single quire being 3<sup>v</sup>:4<sup>r</sup>, 3<sup>r</sup>:4<sup>v</sup>, 2<sup>v</sup>:5<sup>r</sup>, 2<sup>r</sup>:5<sup>v</sup>, 1<sup>v</sup>:6<sup>r</sup>, 1<sup>r</sup>:6<sup>v</sup>. It is not always possible to be certain which of the two pages making up the forme was set first; but type-recurrence evidence does suggest that vv4<sup>v</sup> was set before vv3<sup>r</sup> and vv5<sup>v</sup> before vv2<sup>r</sup>.

Compositor E was an inexpert workman, his work stints being proofed more consistently than any other: fully half of the variants found in the Tragedies section are in the pages he set. But in *Othello* it is the latter part of the play (vv1<sup>v</sup>–vv6<sup>r</sup>), set by Compositor B, that contains the highest proportion of press-variants. The proof-reading of F was done by the page rather than by the forme. The corrector apparently employed one impression of the forme as a proof for one of its pages and then another impression of the same forme for the proofing of the second page. The press was stopped so that the compositor could begin correcting type of the forme being printed immediately one of its pages had been proofed, the impression of the second page being corrected while the compositor was making the changes necessary in the first.

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of the evidence for a change in Shakespeare's intentions in J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik (ed.), *TN*, 1975, pp. xxii–xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion of the copy for the 1600 quarto of this play in A. R. Humphreys (ed.), *Ado*, 1981, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> *Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio.*

~~And hell gnaw his bones,~~  
 Performances are no kin together.  
*Iago.* You charge me most vniustly.  
*Rodo.* With naught but truth: I haue wasted my  
 selfe out of my meanes. The Iewels you haue had from

Fig. 2 Head of first type-column of signature vv3<sup>r</sup> of F (uncorrected version with proof-corrector's mark)

*the Moore*

*Rodori.* I haue heard too much: and your words and  
 Performances are no kin together.  
*Iago.* You charge me most vniustly.  
*Rodo.* With naught but truth: I haue wasted my  
 selfe out of my meanes. The Iewels you haue had from  
 me to deliuer *Desdemona*, would halte haue corrupted a

Fig. 3 Head of first type-column of signature vv3<sup>r</sup> of F (corrected version)

There are seven minor press-corrections made, apparently without reference to copy, on ss3<sup>r</sup>, ss4<sup>r</sup>, and ss4<sup>v</sup>, necessitated by Compositor E's lack of expertise; and there are no variants due to press-correction in the quire tt. It is in the quire vv that we find the heaviest proof-correction, on vv1<sup>v</sup>, vv2<sup>r</sup>, vv2<sup>v</sup>, vv3<sup>r</sup> (that is, on one page of the relevant formes). This activity was almost certainly occasioned by the most remarkable press-variant in the whole of the volume, and one which has an important bearing on the vexed question of the copy used in setting type for the F text.

This variant occurs on vv3<sup>r</sup>. In five of the extant copies of the Folio, one of which (Folger Library Copy 47) has an actual proof-sheet for this page bound up quite regularly as vv3<sup>r</sup>:4<sup>v</sup>, there appear at the head of the first type-column the words 'And

me all conueniencie, then suppliest me with the least advantage of hope: I will indeed no longer endure it. Nor am I yet perswaded to put vp in peace, what already I haue foolishly suffred.

*Iago.* Will you heare me *Rodorigo*?

*Rodori* I

Fig. 4 Foot of second type-column of signature vv2<sup>v</sup> of F

hell gnaw his bones', which is the latter half of Emilia's line at 4.2.135 beginning 'A halter pardon him', which in F is found twelve lines from the top of the second type-column on vv2<sup>v</sup>, this column being the one that ends with 'Iago. Will you heare me *Rodorigo?*' to which the corrected first line of vv3<sup>r</sup> is the answer. Compositor B set the erroneous 'And hell gnaw his bones' after he had completed either vv4<sup>v</sup>b, which ends with Othello's words 'Thy Husband knew it all.' (5.2.140) and the catchword '*Æmil.*', or vv4<sup>r</sup>b, which ends with Desdemona's line 'Then Heauen haue mercy on mee.' (5.2.32-3). The remaining copies of F all have the corrected reading at the head of vv3<sup>r</sup>a '*Rodori. I haue heard too much: and your words and*' (4.2.180). It is noticeable that this error and its correction occur on just those formes which Hinman suggests were set in an unusual order, that is 3<sup>r</sup>:4<sup>v</sup> and 2<sup>r</sup>:5<sup>v</sup>.

An analysis of the mistake and the related circumstances prove crucial to our understanding of the nature of the copy behind F. James Walton<sup>1</sup> has convincingly argued that the misreading could only have occurred if Compositor B had been setting type with several pages of manuscript laid out before him which had been cast-off and in which the words 'And hell gnaw his bones' appeared at the head of a leaf:

It is easy to suppose that Compositor B, when he saw 'And hell gnaw his bones' at the beginning of a page of manuscript, imagined that it followed directly after 'Thy Husband knew it all'... Not only does 'And hell gnaw his bones' make apparent sense when put after 'Thy Husband knew it all', but the word 'hell' occurs twice in the immediately preceding

That she was false. Oh she was heauenly true.  
*O. n.* Cassio did top her: Ask thy husband else.  
 O, I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell:  
 But that I did proceed vpon iust grounds  
 To this extremity. Thy Husband knew it all.

*Æmil.*

Fig. 5 Foot of second type-column of signature vv4<sup>v</sup> of F

*Oth.* Well, do it, and be breefe, I will walke by:  
 I would not kill thy vnprepared Spirit,  
 No, Heuens fore-fend, I would not kill thy Soule.  
*Des.* Talke you of killing?  
*Oth.* I, I do.  
*Des.* Then Heauen haue mercy on mee.

*Oth*

Fig. 6 Foot of second type-column of signature vv4<sup>r</sup> of F

<sup>1</sup> *The Quarto Copy for the First Folio of Shakespeare*, 1971, pp. 215-27.



passage... Having set 'And hell gnaw his bones', Compositor B, we may suppose, proceeded to set the second line from the correct page of manuscript, that which began with the line with which he should have begun v3<sup>r</sup>a ('*Rodori*. I haue heard too much: and your words and').

Further reason for believing that a manuscript rather than a copy of the quarto was before the compositor is to be found in Q<sub>1</sub> where 'Em. A halter pardon him, and hell gnaw his bones:' appears as a single line of type eight lines from the top of signature L1<sup>r</sup>. This makes it unlikely that Q<sub>1</sub> could have been used as the copy for F.

There are also other variants between the two texts, not cited by Walton, which support his argument for manuscript copy for F. For example, at 1.1.153 Q<sub>1</sub> reads 'hells paines' and F 'hell apines'; here the F version is more likely to have been the result of a compositor's misreading of a manuscript than of Q<sub>1</sub>'s type. Similarly at 4.1.74 the compositor set the nonsense phrase in Q<sub>1</sub>, 'here ere while, mad', which is clearly a misreading of the correct wording that F's compositor reproduces, 'heere, o're-whelmed'. But perhaps the most suggestive error of this kind occurs at 5.1.106. Q<sub>1</sub> gives to Iago, as he seeks to involve Bianca in the attack on Cassio, the line 'Doe you perceiue the ieastures of her eye' of which F has the correct version, 'Do you perceiue the gastnesse of her eye?' The page in Q<sub>1</sub> on which this reading appears (L4<sup>v</sup>) was set by Compositor Y who on 14<sup>r</sup> set the phrase 'Ieerres, the Ibes' (4.1.80). The press-corrector, who may well have been consulting the manuscript copy in proofing the inner formes of Sheet 1, changed the words to 'geares, the gibes'. This suggests that Compositor Y had misread the manuscript's 'gastnesse' or 'gastnes' for 'gestures' and, following his own spelling preference in such words, produced the meaningless 'ieastures'.

Variants such as these (and they are many) can readily be ascribed to the misreading of a manuscript by Q<sub>1</sub>'s compositors and can be corrected from the corresponding true reading by the compositors of F. They make it hard to sustain an alternative hypothesis, favoured by Alice Walker and other scholars,<sup>1</sup> that F was set up from a copy of Q<sub>1</sub> laboriously corrected by collation with a theatrical manuscript. Walker, as we have seen, was convinced that Q<sub>1</sub> reproduces a theatrically truncated and memorially contaminated version of the play, even though she admitted that all the variants between Q<sub>1</sub> and F could not possibly have been the result of simple correction of a copy of Q<sub>1</sub> by reference to an authoritative manuscript. In fact, as Walton has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> she failed to find any evidence of errors in F clearly owed to Q<sub>1</sub>'s readings or to manuscript alteration of them. In place of such evidence Walker's main argument for her case rests on errors and anomalies in accidentals common to both texts, in particular the spelling of the endings of weak verbs in the preterite and past participles. She calculates that the two texts are in agreement in '-t' spellings on twenty-four occasions, and in '-d' spellings on twenty-five occasions, and differ on twenty-three occasions where Q<sub>1</sub> has '-t' and F has '-d/-ed' spellings. By stressing the pattern rather

<sup>1</sup> For example, Fredson Bowers in *Bibliography and Textual Criticism*, 1964, pp. 158–201, and William P. Williams in 'The F<sub>1</sub> *Othello* copy-text' (*Papers of the American Bibliographical Society* 63 (1969), 23–5), who seek to support Walker's case by analysis of Compositor F's influence in F and the nature of the F proof-reading.

<sup>2</sup> *Quarto Copy*, pp. 220–2.

than the number of such occurrences, she deduces that Q1's compositor had already modernised a number of spellings by substituting the '-d' ending favoured during the Jacobean period. These were preserved by F's compositor, but two out of three of the older Elizabethan spellings survived in Q1 and half of these were modernised by F's Jacobean compositor.

This argument cannot accommodate the evidence that three compositors and two scribes were responsible for Q1. Nor is there real reason to believe in the systematic modernisation of Q1; the distribution of '-t/-'d/-ed' endings is consistent with Shakespeare's own practice in Hand D of *Sir Thomas More* (c. 1594) and at a later date also. Furthermore, F reflects the modernising tendency characteristic of Jaggard's Compositor B who set most of the *Othello* text in the volume.

If one takes the errors of the graphic kind mentioned above and compares them with non-graphic errors – if one compares, that is, those errors that can be traced to a manuscript original with those traceable to other agencies – it appears that F preserves more of the graphic than the non-graphic errors, and does so in a proportion that is close to that in Hand D of *Sir Thomas More* but markedly different from that found in Folio plays that we know to have been set from earlier quarto copy.

### Substantive variants

While we may be confident, therefore, that F, like Q1, was set up from manuscript copy, it does not follow that it was set from the same manuscript. Reason for believing that it was not is yielded by a scrutiny of the substantive variants. The *Othello* variants have proved intractable to analysis and no theory of transmission yet produced has enabled an editor to make his choice of readings on purely bibliographical grounds. Scholars have contrived to leave themselves free to choose between numerous pairs of Q1 and F variants and to show to their own satisfaction, by the exercise of tact and judgement, that one is more 'Shakespearean' than the other. It is this persisting truth that forces us to consider the possibility that underlying Q1 and F there may be two Shakespearean versions of the play.

We know that in one respect at least the copy for F incorporated revisions, in that fifty-three oaths in Q1 are either excised or euphemised. Almost certainly these changes were made in response to the Act of 1606 against profanity and swearing in stage plays. Examination of these changes makes it clear that the task of eliminating such blasphemy was not carried out in any mechanical fashion. Certainly some oaths are simply omitted – for example, the 'Zouns' that appears in a prose passage at 1.1.109 in Q1 is dropped in F, as are the 'Faith' at 4.2.180, the 'Heauen' at 3.4.77 and the 'God' at 4.1.205. At other points there is the substitution of a less offensive word, such as 'troth' for 'faith' at 3.4.181 or 'Heauen' for 'God' at 3.4.73 and 4.3.100. Yet there is no consistency in such changes; for 'Faith' is also replaced by 'Why' (3.3.287), 'sooth' (3.4.92) and 'indeed' (3.4.51). There are occurrences where neither omission nor substitution was possible because of the requirements of the metre: thus at 1.1.4–6 Q1's

S'blood, but you will not heare me,  
If euer I did dreame of such a matter, abhorre me.

becomes F's

But you'l not heare me. If euer I did dream  
Of such a matter, abhorre me.

Neither version is very satisfactory metrically, but it is at least obvious that it was the excision of 'S'blood' that caused the rearrangement.

When one examines the handling of the oaths in the two texts, one suspects that the censoring was done either by the author or a very self-confident book-keeper or printer. More importantly, it is plain that the oaths found in Q1 have very good literary or dramatic reasons for being there – that is, that they must have originated with Shakespeare himself. For example, they are a characteristic of Iago's idiom and it is noticeable that Othello starts to use them only under extreme stress or Iago's influence; which means that they are one aspect of the stylistic corruption of Othello's speech by Iago that has been traced by S. L. Bethell<sup>1</sup> in his article 'The diabolic images in *Othello*'.

The more extended passages in F that do not appear in Q1 are a more complicated matter. Some of these can certainly be accounted for as accidents of the printing process. For example, compositorial eye-skip is responsible for the lines omitted in Q1 at 4.2.70–6. In F at this point Othello says

Was this faire Paper? This most goodly Booke  
Made to write Whore vpon? What committed,  
Committed? Oh, thou publicke Commoner,  
I should make very Forges of my cheekes,  
That would to Cynders burne vp Modestie,  
Did I but speake thy deedes. What committed?  
Heauen stoppes the Nose at it, and the Moone winks:

In Q1 lines 72–5 (on signature κ4<sup>r</sup>) are omitted. Obviously Compositor Y set lines 70 and 71 and then continued with line 76 because his eye caught the ending of line 75, 'What committed', which is identical with that of line 71. The omission would not be detected, for there is no correction against copy in the κ gathering. Other substantial omissions probably similar to this in origin also occur, for example, at 3.4.7–8; 4.2.100; 4.3.57–60; and 5.2.150–3.

Some passages are not susceptible of such a simple mechanical explanation. Roderigo's speech at 1.1.119–39 explaining clearly to Brabantio exactly what Desdemona has done is reduced in Q1 to the first line and last three lines of the speech in F. Although lines 120 and 137 do begin with similar phrases ('If't be...' and 'If she be...') it is rather a long omission to be accounted for as an eye-skip mistake. It is also doubtful if simple accident can explain the absence in Q1 of the senator's clarifying lines about the probable reasons for the movements of the Turkish fleet at 1.3.24–30, or Othello's remarkable verse at 3.3.384–91 about his state of mind, or

<sup>1</sup> *S.Sur.* 5 (1952), 62–80.

some of the most strikingly exotic poetry in the play – those on the Pontic and the Hellespont at 3.3.454–61. The most famous of Q1's mutilations is, of course, the absence of the Willow Song and its surrounding text. The lines concerned are 4.3.30–50, 52–4, and also the allusion made to the song at 5.2.244–6 by the dying Emilia.

When one considers all the longer passages in F which are not in Q1, it is obvious that no single bibliographical theory about the relationship between the two texts will serve to account for all the lines affected. The idea that they were cuts made to shorten the play for performance we have seen to be palpably unacceptable, as is the notion that the Willow Song was omitted because the boy actor playing Desdemona had no singing voice – neither have most of the modern actresses who have played the role very movingly. It is striking that none of the lines absent from Q1 is crucial to an understanding of the action of the play. All are elaborations of effects already present in Q1 and can easily be defended on the grounds of the contributions they variously make to many aspects of the drama: clear exposition (1.1.120–36; 1.3.24–30), character portrayal (4.2.72–5; 4.2.150–63), psychological verisimilitude (3.3.454–61; 4.1.37–41), dramatic effect (4.3.30–50, 57–60), interconnection of images associated with the 'unnaturalness' of Desdemona's choice of a husband and the supernatural elements mixed with Othello's love, that Coghill has analysed with great subtlety<sup>1</sup> (1.2.65, 72–7; 1.3.60–4). Needless to say, all these anomalous passages could have come only from the pen of the author. They look more like Shakespeare's amplifications of his own text than cuts arbitrarily or purposively imposed on some original full version.

There are a few passages in Q1 which do not appear in F, the longest of them being four lines. Most of these (for example, 1.1.15; 1.3.199; 2.1.82; 3.1.28; 4.2.32, 166) are capable of explanation as scribal or compositorial errors. Only two Q1-only sections of text are significant. The first of these occurs in the interchange between Iago and Roderigo at 1.3.359–65, which in Q1 reads

*Iag.* Go to, farewell: – doe you heare *Roderigo*?

*Rod.* what say you?

*Iag.* No more of drowning, doe you heare?

*Rod.* I am chang'd.

*Exit Roderigo*

*Iag.* Goe to, farewell, put money enough in your purse:

Thus doe I euer make my foole my purse:

In F this appears as

*Iago.* Go too, farewell. Do you heare *Rodorigo*?

*Rod.* Ile sell all my Land.

*Exit.*

*Iago.* Thus do I euer make my Foole, my purse:

Clearly both versions are defective; but it is not hard to attribute both mix-ups to the printing-house.

The second section found in Q1 but not in F occurs during the murder of Desdemona (5.2.84–9) and is important in that it seems to imply a different staging from that found in F. Q1 has

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare's Professional Skills*, pp. 183–7.

*Des.* But halfe an houre, but while I say one prayer.

*Oth.* Tis too late.

*he stifles her.*

*Des.* O Lord, Lord, Lord.

*Emillia calls within.*

*Em.* My Lord, my Lord, what ho, my Lord, my Lord.

*Oth.* What voyce is this? not dead? not yet quite dead?

I that am cruell, am yet mercifull,

I would not haue thee linger in thy paine, – so, so.

F's version is

*Des.* But halfe an houre.

*Oth.* Being done, there is no pawse.

*Des.* But while I say one prayer.

*Oth.* It is too late.

*Smothers her.*

*Æmilia at the doore.*

*Æmil.* My Lord, my Lord? What hoa?

My Lord, my Lord.

*Oth.* What noise is this? Not dead? not yet quite dead?

I that am cruell, am yet mercifull,

I would not haue thee linger in thy paine?

So, so.

In Q1's version Othello's words 'What voyce is this?' can only refer to Desdemona's exclamation and is connected with 'not dead?'; whereas in F they clearly allude to Emilia's cry offstage. As in the case of the Iago–Roderigo exchange, one suspects that the true text lies in some conflation of the two passages; the weakness of both probably deriving from the printing-house, for in Q1 the passage is spread between the bottom of signature M2<sup>r</sup> and the top of signature M2<sup>v</sup>, and in F across the foot of the first type-column and the head of the second type-column of signature vv4<sup>v</sup>, a page on which there was probably some irregularity in setting.

In addition to the lines appearing exclusively in one or other of the two texts, there are many hundreds of separate variants in words and phrases. Many of these can be attributed to scribal and compositorial errors. For example, there are frequent differences in number, such as 'other' (Q1), 'others' (F) at 1.1.29; 'griefes' (Q1), 'griefe' (F) at 1.3.55; 'dores' (Q1), 'doore' (F) at 4.2.143, often amounting to a dozen differences in the space of two hundred lines. Another class of variant is of verb form: 'does' (Q1), 'doth' (F) at 4.2.30; 'takes' (Q1), 'taketh' (F) at 4.2.217; 'Has' (Q1), 'Hath' (F) at 4.2.124. A single extra word in one or other of the texts is found in many sentences; so that, for example, F supplies a second 'now' to Q1's 'Euen now' at 1.1.89 and has 'Pray you' for Q1's 'Pray' at 4.2.23, whereas it is Q1 that supplies an extra 'now' to F's 'are making the Beast with two backs' at 1.1.116 and has 'warrant you' for F's 'warrant' at 4.2.167. Simple transpositions occur throughout, such as 'all be' (F), 'be all' (Q1) at 1.1.43; 'haue we' (F), 'we haue' (Q1) at 1.3.304–5; 'her Gloues, her Mask' (F), 'her mask, her gloues' (Q1) at 4.2.8.

Many of the variant readings provide different words which convey the same meaning. For example, there is little to choose in sense between Q1's 'For be sure' and F's 'Be assur'd' at 1.2.11, or 'yond' (F), 'yonder' (Q1) at 1.2.28, or 'Introth' (F), 'By my troth' (Q1) at 4.3.68. But there are others where the sense is seriously affected

and which cannot be explained by resort to any theory of printing-house origin or scribal corruption or memorial contamination. No theory of relationship between Q1 and F has yet been produced which enables us to choose confidently between variants like the following: 'sneake' (Q1), 'steale' (F) at 3.3.39; 'Indian' (Q1), 'Iudean' (F) at 5.2.343; 'reputation' (Q1), 'estimation' (F) at 1.3.270; 'provulgate' (Q1), 'promulgate' (F) at 1.2.21; 'enscerped to clog' (Q1), 'ensteep'd, to enclogge' (F) at 2.1.70; 'sorne' (Q1), 'storme' (F) at 1.3.245; 'Wring' (Q1), 'Wrench' (F) at 5.2.285; 'Reprobation' (Q1), 'Reprobance' (F) at 5.2.208; 'faithfull' (Q1), 'truely' (F) at 1.3.122. Each word in these pairs and in many others like them in the two texts can be and have been defended as being the more 'Shakespearean' on the grounds of dramatic effect, poetic power, literary appropriateness and so on.

### Editorial procedure

Such is the evidence on which we must assess the nature of the Q1 and F texts and their interrelationship. It is impossible in the present state of knowledge to be dogmatic, or to build on bibliographical foundations a theory of transmission which would enable us to approach with confidence a Shakespearean original of the play. Both texts are defective owing to a variety of circumstances surrounding their production; yet each is superior to the other in many respects. Clearly behind each text there lies a Shakespearean manuscript. The crucial question persists – was it the same manuscript?

There are a number of possible editorial paradigms, of which three are dominant: (1) that Q1 and F are independently, but not directly, derived from a single Shakespearean holograph; (2) that F derives from a copy of Q1 wholly or partly corrected from a redaction of the same Shakespearean holograph; (3) that Q1 and F derive from two different, but closely related, Shakespearean holographs. All three hypotheses are likely in practice to yield an eclectic text, but with differing emphases. The first allows to each text an authority dependent on the reliability attributed to its transmission. The second allows a certain precedence to Q1 while admitting an uncertain number of 'corrections' and 'revisions' from F. The third may or may not invite an eclectic procedure, depending upon the degree of autonomy, precedence and authority postulated of the two underlying autographs; it could even invite separate editions of F and Q1 *Othello*.

M. R. Ridley in his Arden edition of 1958 and Alice Walker and Dover Wilson in their New Shakespeare edition of 1957 take the second option, but with sharply differing editorial consequences. Ridley believed that by adopting Q1 as copy-text, reinstating 'the cuts made in it' with some 'possible revisions' from F, he could get 'as near as we are likely to get to the play as Shakespeare first wrote it, with nothing between us and him but the blunders of honest but not always skilful transcriber and compositor.'<sup>1</sup> Walker and Wilson assumed that F was set up from a copy of Q1 which had been systematically corrected from the promptbook underlying Walkley's manuscript. They therefore give priority to F when readings are evenly matched but

<sup>1</sup> Ridley, p. xliii.

follow Q1 where 'it appears to have preserved a reading more consonant with Shakespeare's style and dramatic intentions'.<sup>1</sup> Both editions are thus eclectic.

The practice adopted in the present edition is based upon the belief that Q1 and F are derived from two distinct manuscripts of equal authority, both of which have been variously corrupted in transmission, by scribes and compositors in Q1 and by editorial intervention and compositors in F. In fact, my strong impression is that what we are dealing with is Shakespeare's first version of the play (behind Q1) and his own transcription of it (behind F), during the process of making which he not only created additions for dramatic clarification or imaginative amplification but was also enticed into changes in words and phrases which appeared to him at the time as improvements on his first thoughts. This means that the text is, like its predecessors, an eclectic one; but one which has been arrived at by treating each pair of variants as a separate entity. The adoption of one variant or the other has been governed by a consideration of the known factors concerning the occurrence of the reading in each text. In some cases the choice between them was a simple one: paleographical knowledge determined the acceptance of F's 'heere, o're-whelmed' at 4.1.74, and the same kind of evidence combined with an awareness of the nature of the press-correction in Q1 demanded we read 'gastnesse' at 5.1.106. Accidental omissions which are probably the result of printing-house carelessness, such as those in Q1 at 4.2.72-5 or in F at 1.3.199, have been supplied by reference to the fuller text. At points where both F and Q1 are defective owing to compositorial error Shakespeare's probable intention has been made out from a conflation of the two texts (for example, at 1.3.359-65). The substantial passages in F which are clearly Shakespearean, the omission of which from Q1 cannot be explained on any bibliographical grounds (such as the Willow Song or Othello's speech at 3.3.454-61), have been adopted on the grounds that they were clearly written by Shakespeare at some point during the play's composition for inclusion at those moments in the action at which they occur in F. Where F and Q1 are both obviously erroneous, emendation has been made after due consideration of the suggestions made by previous scholars about the origin of the error in both texts and the most likely word or phrase required. The oaths in Q1 which were expurgated in F are a special case in that they appear to have been excised systematically as a result of external pressure and so generally need to be adopted in a modern text.

The procedure outlined above is only slightly different in result, if not in theory, from that adopted by previous editors of the play. It is when we come to think about the treatment of those hundreds of variants between Q1 and F, encompassing variations in number, alternative verb forms, and numerous different words and phrases equally appropriate and equally 'Shakespearean', that the difficulties arise. Previous editors have attempted to establish one text or the other as the primary authority by arguing that one text is based upon the other or that both have behind them a common original Shakespearean copy. But no one who has studied the Q1 and F variants can fail at least to suspect that, when all possible allowance has been made for scribal and compositorial sophistication or memorial contamination, the two texts reflect two stages of composition for both of which Shakespeare himself was responsible—

<sup>1</sup> NS, pp. 133-5.

particularly when one gives proper weight to Coghill's discussion of the matter and the recent support of and additions to his findings published by Honigmann.<sup>1</sup>

But if we accept the possibility that there are two versions of *Othello*, both by Shakespeare, what are the implications? One may conclude with Honigman<sup>2</sup> that 'traditional editorial principles' are 'as unsatisfactory as the traditional conflated texts' and therefore the only intellectually honest procedure for an editor to follow is to produce for the reader separate or parallel texts of Q1 and F, bibliographically purged of error, in the manner of W. W. Greg's edition of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or J. C. Maxwell's of Wordsworth's *The Prelude*.<sup>3</sup> But the case of *Othello* is different from these, for the variants between the texts lie in the area of details rather than in design, overall intention and emphasis. Providing the editor supplies sufficient collation for the reader to reconstruct Q1 and F in the original form, he is free to offer what he thinks to be a 'best' version of the play in the full knowledge that in fact he is making a third version of it. This means, of course, that such an edition will be to some extent similar to a stage production (which is always an interpretation) or a critical essay about it. But then all modern editions of a Shakespeare play – indeed Q1 and F themselves – have always been just this.

### Later seventeenth-century editions

Following the publication of the First Folio in 1623 five other seventeenth-century quartos of the play were issued: in 1630 (Q2) by Richard Hawkins, in 1655 (Q3) by William Leek, and in 1681 (Q4), 1687 (Q5) and 1695 (Q6), all by Richard Bentley. The play was also included in the later Folio reprints of 1632 (F2), 1663–4 (F3) and 1685 (F4).

None of these texts has any independent authority, although Q2 is interesting in that it was almost certainly set from a copy of Q1 which had been most carefully collated with a copy of F.<sup>4</sup> It includes all the passages in F not found in Q1 and follows F in the treatment of the oaths; but it also makes alterations as detailed as, for example, the changing of Q1's 'you will' (1.1.4) to F's 'you'l'; Q1's 'handkercher' (3.3.309) to F's 'Handkerchiefe'; and Q1's 'often' (3.3.99) to F's 'oft'. Yet it follows much of Q1's spelling and punctuation, reproduces its stage directions, and often prefers its readings to those of F at points that most modern editors have found controversial, such as 'beare all excellency' over F's 'tyre the Ingeniuer' (2.1.65) and 'lodging' over F's 'Loading' (5.2.359). In fact the editorial procedure followed in Q2 indicates that, only seven years after the publication of the First Folio, at least one printer considered that Q1 was not completely superseded by F, which could easily have been reproduced by Hawkins.

<sup>1</sup> 'Shakespeare's revised plays: *King Lear* and *Othello*', *The Library*, 6th ser., 4 (1982), 156–73.

<sup>2</sup> 'Shakespeare's revised plays', p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> W. W. Greg (ed.), *Marlow's 'Doctor Faustus' 1604–1616: Parallel Texts*, 1950; J. C. Maxwell (ed.), *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> See Charlton Hinman, 'The "copy" for the second quarto of *Othello*', *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, 1948, pp. 373–89.



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