For Stephen Pride and, of course, Shifra
CONTENTS

About This Book ix

Introduction xvii

Some Essentials of the Shakespearean Stage xxxvii

Othello 1

An Essay by Harold Bloom 205

Further Reading 259

Finding List 265
Written four centuries ago, in a fairly early form of Modern English, *Othello* is a gorgeously passionate, witty, and complex text. Many of the play’s social and historical underpinnings necessarily need, for the modern reader, the kinds of explanation offered in the Introduction. But what needs even more, and far more detailed, explanation are the play’s very words. Here is Iago, as he so often is, complaining that he did not get the job he deserved:

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 bumbast circumstance,
Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,
Nonsuits my mediators.

(1.1.7–14)

In twenty-first-century America, “suit” tends to mean a legal action. Here, however, it means a request.
“Off-capped” is founded on the fact that everyone wore a hat and that to “doff,” or remove, one’s hat was a sign of respect.

“The faith of man” is not some vaguely humanistic doctrine but a simple reference to what Renaissance Europe regarded as the faith, Christianity.

In twenty-first-century America, again, “price” means the cost of something. Here, however, it refers to Iago’s self-evaluation, his “value.”

“Place” is for us almost entirely spatial, locational. We go to a “place,” we live in a “place.” But here it means post or position. The construction “as loving” means “being someone who loves.” Prepositions were very much more elastic, in Shakespeare’s day.

In the phrase “pride and purposes,” the first word remains clear to us. But we tend to hesitate at “purposes,” which here means intentions.

And as “evades them” indicates, pronouns and their antecedents are also employed more loosely. “Them” refers to the “great ones of the city.” Verb tenses, too, have changed: “evades” is clearly a present tense, today. But here, “evades” is in the historical present tense, which effectively means the past rather than the present.

We might be able to guess at the meaning of “bumbast,” but certainty is preferable to supposition. It is indeed the ancestor of our word “bombast.” But “circumstance” would be impervious to guessing, for it means circumlocution, or beating around the bush.

“Horribly stuffed” has nothing to do with warfare: it means dreadfully padded.

“Epithet” has considerably shifted, in our time, having come to
mean words of insult or scorn. Here, however, “epithets” refer only to vocabulary or verbal terms.

“Nonsuits” means to rebuff or turn aside.
And “mediators” refers, not to arbitration cases, but to go-betweens.

In this very fully annotated edition, I therefore present this passage, not in the bare form quoted above, but thoroughly supported by bottom-of-the-page notes:

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 bumbast circumstance, Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,
Nonsuits my mediators.
ABOUT THIS BOOK

The modern reader or listener of course will better understand this brief exchange in context, as the drama unfolds. But without full explanation of words that have over the years shifted in meaning, and usages that have been altered, neither the modern reader nor the modern listener is likely to be equipped for full comprehension.

I believe annotations of this sort create the necessary bridges, from Shakespeare’s four-centuries-old English across to ours. Some readers, to be sure, will be able to comprehend unusual, historically different meanings without glosses. Those not familiar with the modern meaning of particular words will easily find clear, simple definitions in any modern dictionary. But most readers are not likely to understand Shakespeare’s intended meaning, absent such glosses as I here offer.

My annotation practices have followed the same principles used in The Annotated Milton, published in 1999, and in my annotated edition of Hamlet, published (as the initial volume in this series) in 2003. Classroom experience has validated these editions. Classes of mixed upper-level undergraduates and graduate students have more quickly and thoroughly transcended language barriers than ever before. This allows the teacher, or a general reader without a teacher, to move more promptly and confidently to the non-linguistic matters that have made Shakespeare and Milton great and important poets.

It is the inevitable forces of linguistic change, operant in all living tongues, which have inevitably created such wide degrees of obstacles to ready comprehension—not only sharply different meanings, but subtle, partial shifts in meaning that allow us to think we understand when, alas, we do not. Speakers of related languages like Dutch and German also experience this shifting of
the linguistic ground. Like early Modern English (ca. 1600) and
the Modern English now current, those languages are too close
for those who know only one language, and not the other, to be
readily able always to recognize what they correctly understand
and what they do not. When, for example, a speaker of Dutch says
“Men kofer is kapot,” a speaker of German will know that some-
thing belonging to the Dutchman is broken (“kapot” = “kaputt”
in German, and “men” = “mein”). But without more linguistic
awareness than the average person is apt to have, the German
speaker will not identify “kofer” (“trunk” in Dutch) with “Kör-
per”—a modern German word meaning “physique, build, body.”
The closest word to “kofer” in modern German, indeed, is
“Scrankkoffer,” which is too large a leap for ready comprehen-
sion. Speakers of different Romance languages (French, Spanish,
Italian), and all other related but not identical tongues, all experi-
ence these difficulties, as well as the difficulty of understanding a
text written in their own language five, or six, or seven hundred
years earlier. Shakespeare’s English is not yet so old that it requires,
like many historical texts in French and German, or like Old En-
glish texts—for example, Beowulf—a modern translation. Much
poetry evaporates in translation: language is immensely particu-
lar. The sheer sound of Dante in thirteenth-century Italian is pro-
foundly worth preserving. So too is the sound of Shakespeare.

I have annotated prosody (metrics) only when it seemed truly
necessary or particularly helpful. Readers should have no prob-
lem with the silent “e”: whenever an “e” in Shakespeare is not
silent, it is marked “è” (except, to be sure, in words which modern
usage always syllabifies, like “tented,” “excepted,” “headed”). The
notation used for prosody, which is also used in the explanation of
Elizabethan pronunciation, follows the extremely simple form of
my From Stress to Stress: An autobiography of English prosody (see “Further Reading,” near the end of this book). Syllables with metrical stress are capitalized; all other syllables are in lowercase letters. I have managed to employ normalized Elizabethan spellings, in most indications of pronunciation, but I have sometimes been obliged to deviate, in the higher interest of being understood.

I have annotated, as well, a limited number of such other matters, sometimes of interpretation, sometimes of general or historical relevance, as have seemed to me seriously worthy of inclusion. These annotations have been most carefully restricted: this is not intended to be a book of literary commentary. It is for that reason that the glossing of metaphors has been severely restricted. There is almost literally no end to discussion and/or analysis of metaphor, especially in Shakespeare. To yield to temptation might well be to double or triple the size of this book—and would also change it from a historically oriented language guide to a work of an unsteadily mixed nature. In the process, I believe, neither language nor literature would be well or clearly served.

Where it seemed useful, and not obstructive of important textual matters, I have modernized spelling, including capitalization. I have frequently repunctuated. Since the original printed texts of Othello (there not being, as there never are for Shakespeare, any surviving manuscripts) are frequently careless as well as self-contradictory, I have been relatively free with the wording of stage directions—and in some cases have added brief directions, to indicate who is speaking to whom. I have made no emendations; I have necessarily been obliged to make choices. Textual decisions have been annotated when the differences between or
among the original printed texts seem either marked or of unusual interest.

In the interests of compactness and brevity, I have employed in my annotations (as consistently as I am able) a number of stylistic and typographical devices:

• The annotation of a single word does not repeat that word

• The annotation of more than one word repeats the words being annotated, which are followed by an equals sign and then by the annotation; the footnote number in the text is placed after the last of the words being annotated

• In annotations of a single word, alternative meanings are usually separated by commas; if there are distinctly different ranges of meaning, the annotations are separated by arabic numerals inside parentheses—(1), (2), and so on; in more complexly worded annotations, alternative meanings expressed by a single word are linked by a forward slash, or solidus: /

• Explanations of textual meaning are not in parentheses; comments about textual meaning are

• Except for proper nouns, the word at the beginning of all annotations is in lower case

• Uncertainties are followed by a question mark, set in parentheses: (?)

• When particularly relevant, “translations” into twenty-first-century English have been added, in parentheses

• Annotations of repeated words are not repeated. Explanations of the first instance of such common words are followed by the
ABOUT THIS BOOK

sign *. Readers may easily track down the first annotation, using the brief Finding List at the back of the book. Words with entirely separate meanings are annotated only for meanings no longer current in Modern English.

The most important typographical device here employed is the sign * placed after the first (and only) annotation of words and phrases occurring more than once. There is an alphabetically arranged listing of such words and phrases in the Finding List at the back of the book. The Finding List contains no annotations but simply gives the words or phrases themselves and the numbers of the relevant act, the scene within that act, and the footnote number within that scene for the word’s first occurrence.
Over the past four hundred years, neither the text of Othello, nor the “true” understanding of that text, has been fully settled. We lack manuscript copies of any of Shakespeare’s plays, and different printed sources frequently provide quite different readings. Given the nature of this annotated edition, however, and the fact that Othello’s textual issues are more or less resolvable (especially in the light of Scott McMillin’s extremely helpful edition of the play’s First Quarto), I want to deal first with interpretation and more briefly, and only thereafter, with textual issues.

The primary focus of interpretive disagreement has become the character Othello. Who and what he is meant to be—his origins, his nature—have recently been intensely disputed. Traditionally, Othello was taken to be a black African. But the fact that he is described by Shakespeare as “the Moor” has led to the contention that, knowing pretty clearly what a “Moor” was, but not being anything like so well informed as to black Africans, Shakespeare must have intended Othello to be a dark-skinned non-Negroid Muslim, a good deal more Arab than Ethiopian.

However, “as late as the 17th century,” records The Oxford En-
glish Dictionary, under “Moor 1,” “the Moors were commonly supposed to be mostly black or swarthy (though the existence of ‘white Moors’ was recognized), and hence the word was often used for ‘Negro.’” Still, the play’s repeated references to Othello as “black,” it is argued, are no more definitive than the early-seventeenth-century meaning of the word “black” itself. And the definition under “black 1c” explains that, though “strictly applied to negroes and negritos, and other dark-skinned races . . . [the word is applied] often, loosely, to non-European races, little darker than many Europeans.” The play’s reference to Othello as “thick-lipped” has been similarly debated.

What had earlier been understood as racial and cultural differences in Othello’s psychology and behavior are therefore, it is contended, simply personal to Othello, like the epilepsy from which Iago (but no one else in the play) says he suffers. Accordingly, whether Othello is indeed black in the current meaning of the word is a matter of basic importance in understanding both the character and the play that bears his name.

Shakespeare’s Knowledge of Black Africans

“I will not say,” wrote A. C. Bradley a hundred years ago, “that Shakespeare imagined him [Othello] as a Negro and not as a Moor, for that might imply that he distinguished Negroses and Moors precisely as we do.”¹ In fact, there were highly visible Moors in Shakespeare’s London; there can be small doubt that he knew quite well what Moors looked like. He may well not have known a great deal about them, at least at firsthand; he seems unlikely to have met or had any dealings with Moorish ambassadors and other such lofty folk. Yet on the evidence, he appears to have known black Africans a good deal better. “By 1596 [ten years be-
fore the probable date of *Othello*’s composition] there were so many black people in London that Queen Elizabeth I issued an edict demanding that they leave. . . . When Shakespeare wrote *Othello* he was not . . . particularly ‘confused’ about racial identities. . . . [He] would have seen black people on the streets of London for most of his adult life, and so would his audience. Racial jokes and word play were well within their experience and understanding.”

London’s black population of perhaps five or ten thousand was to some extent created by upper-class fashions. Starting with Queen Elizabeth herself, “black people were seen as fashionable accessories . . . and the use of black servants and entertainers by royalty and nobility filtered down to much less affluent households and establishments. . . . Whites ‘blacked up’ for roles as Africans in plays and masques.”

But apart from the dictates of fashion and the upper classes, and distinctly “within Shakespeare’s lifetime,” London had become deeply involved in “the exchange of goods and slaves between Britain, Africa and the Americas. [This] was a trade which permanently transformed the economies of all three areas.” Black sailors appeared on streets and in pubs; “planters returned home with their black servants.” We are now aware—there having been a surge, in the past few decades, of British historical investigation into these matters, clearly caused by the massive post–World War Two in-migration of black people from British colonies—that the chronological start of this earlier, more limited, but still significantly sized in-migration began as early as 1555 (before Shakespeare’s birth) and no later than 1588. Shakespeare’s demonstrable familiarity with the sweep of daily life in England’s teeming capital city, and his fairly detailed knowledge
of many trades and professions, across a wide-ranging social scale, enhances the likelihood that he may well have socialized with, and even more probably seen close up and conversed or spent time with, a good number of black Africans.

This is of course not a certainty, but only a preponderance of evidence, supporting the likelihood of Shakespeare’s personal knowledge of black Africans and Othello’s racial origins. To counterbalance these probabilities, there is Iago’s reference to Othello as a “Barbary [Arabic] horse” (1.1.110) and also Iago’s bald lie that, after leaving Cyprus, Othello and his wife will proceed, not to Venice, but to Mauritania, the Moorish “homeland” (4.2.221). The historical evidence as we now have it seems a good deal more reliable than the perpetually untruthful Iago.

**Othello: Social and Psychological Factors**

Black Africans lived in a wide variety of landscapes, spoke a great many different languages, yet tended to share certain basic social characteristics. “It is important to stress the traditional nature of Africa,” writes the Ghanian W. E. Abraham. That is, rather than transcontinental political unity, black African societies were structured around relatively fixed customs and practices, transmitted as intact as possible from generation to generation. This was not an existence formed or governed either by electoral choices or by externalized hierarchies. “We know that such societies,” explains Eli Sagan, “though lacking a state, did not live in social chaos. . . . Custom and the power of custom, reinforced by the inexorable pressure of the kin, maintained order.” Though inevitably affected by outside forces, and local group rivalries, this remained an essentially stable way of life. Not surprisingly, the attitude of traditional societies toward individualism in thought or action was
“cool, if not downright hostile.” 7 All the sacred, unsolvable matters of life were dealt with not by personal decisions but by magic.

These circumstances, in turn, fostered what Bronislaw Malinowski has called a “clear-cut division” between conditions which are known and natural and, on the other hand, “the domain of the unaccountable and adverse influences, as well as the great unearned increment of fortunate coincidences. The first conditions are coped with by knowledge and work, the second by magic.”8 As Sagan puts it, “Witchcraft, not a moralistic religion, made the world go round.”9 Accordingly, it is not that the fundamental cause-and-effect stance of modern Western societies is absent from traditional societies, but rather that it is only selectively relevant. “Magic, which is so important in the religious and moral life [of traditional cultures], is probably the most effective means of social control.”10

Nor are these matters that have changed a great deal, over the past five hundred years. “The persistence of [traditional] culture is indicated by the similarity of twentieth-century traditions . . . and sixteenth-century reports . . . [In southeast Africa, for example,] they eat the same kind of seed cakes, wear the same dress at military dances, follow the same pattern of symbolic dancing, live by the same type of social organization, and practice the same economy that characterized their different groups when [in the early sixteenth century] the Portuguese first encountered them.”11 Traditional cultures being, by definition, group-oriented, someone born into such a social setting necessarily adheres to and depends upon the group for both social and inner psychological stability. Deprived of the group, the individual inevitably lacks many basic resources, and most especially those for dealing with adverse circumstances.
These are enormously important matters for understanding Othello. He is likely to have been born and raised in a traditional society; he also claims to have been of royal descent, and we know nothing to the contrary. Kidnapped, enslaved, he literally fought his way to ascendancy, ending as a valued, powerful general in the hired service of the Venetian state. Along the way, he became a believing and practicing Christian, and acquired much of the manners and mores of the Christian West. (It is worth nothing that, had he been a Muslim, conversion to Christianity might have been more problematical.) That is, in the process of struggling with the urgent strictures of his difficult, uprooted existence, but drawing on the deep strengths of his apparently innate physical and military abilities, Othello created both an impressive career and, within its bounds, a stable, well-functioning personality. The Othello we see in act 1 is strong, forceful, contained—an admirable, profoundly functional commanding officer.

Yet as the play plainly shows, the twin forces of traditional, custom-ruled society, and the magic which controls it, cannot help but be persistent, even if for the moment dormant. Othello’s immensely successful military career thus remains a structure of narrow focus; the bright polish of success remains a relatively thin veneer. As long as he continues to follow his military path, he is secure and will likely continue to be successful. The Othello we see in act 1, however, is a man already in the early stages of being drawn past the boundaries of a purely military sphere. The soldier’s world, as he so eloquently explains, is all-male, rough and perpetually isolated from the non-traditional world of sophisticated, westernized Venice—which is of course, for Shakespeare and his audience, the world of early Jacobean England and, most particularly, of swirling, cosmopolitan London.
Before the start of act 1, Othello has eloped with a young, wealthy, and white heiress, a native Venetian. He is newly married and about to take on domestic and a host of other social involvements that, in this non-traditional western world, he has never before had to face. The excitement of new and understandably rich satisfactions for a time sustains him. “O my fair warrior!” he greets Desdemona, when in the first scene of act 2 they are reunited on Cyprus. “O my soul’s joy!” (lines 177, 179). Even in act 2’s third scene, which would appear to involve—but does not—the strictly military matter of a drunken fight between soldiers, Othello remains solidly in control.

But the drunken fight, like a runaway wagon, has with Iago’s shoulder at the wheel begun to roll the world away from Othello. When in act 3, scene 4, Othello expatiates at some length about the magical powers of his handkerchief—a treasure given him, he says, by his mother, before his abrupt and violent removal from his own culture—we need to pay extremely close attention. Desdemona no longer has the handkerchief; Othello no longer has the absolute trust he once had in both Cassio and Desdemona. The whole origin for Othello’s disquisition, here, is that the mover and shaker of the play, Iago, has begun to plant his poisonous speculative suspicions. Desdemona has been unable to produce the magical handkerchief. “That is a fault,” Othello says, and terribly seriously, just before the first words quoted below (3.4.52). The handwriting is on the wall. Once magic has been set into motion, Othello knows in his bones how desperately powerful and how powerfully real are the consequences. He is a genuine Christian, to be sure. But he cannot escape from the world that created him, cannot help sensing that Desdemona’s unfaithfulness would destroy the very fabric of his existence. By the end of the scene—
not in the lines quoted below, but immediately thereafter—his inner collapse is not only well under way, but starkly visible. Othello becomes stentorian, pounding out his demand that his wife produce the magic handkerchief, and ends by shouting “Away!” and stalking off. This is emphatically not the Othello of act 1.

_Othello_ 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
Entirely to her love. But if she lost it,
Or made a gift of it, my father’s eye
Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me,
And bid me, when my fate would have me wive,
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.

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,
And it was dyed in mummy, which the skillful
Conserved of maiden’s hearts.

_Desdemona_ Indeed? Is’t true?

_Othello_ Most veritable, therefore look to’t well. (3.4.53–74)
Note that, for Shakespeare and his audience, “perdition” was more than mere ruin or destruction. It evoked the ultimate threat of final ruin, the eternal incarceration of the human spirit in hell. In our world, “damnation” has become an imprecation and very little more. In Renaissance England, it had terrible and universally known significance. And Othello’s steep descent, which I will briefly examine in a moment, is clearly hell-bound: “Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,” he cries (late in the play’s final scene). “Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!” The devils he invokes to “whip me” are not meant to be metaphorical.

When Othello next appears, at the start of act 4, we see him firmly ensnared in Iago’s web, engaged in an elaborate discussion of the entirely imaginary “details” of Desdemona’s entirely imaginary adultery with Cassio. Three dozen lines later, his unraveling is complete:

_Othello_ Lie with her? Lie on her? We say lie on her, when they belie her. Lie with her. That’s fulsome. Handkerchief – confessions – handkerchief! To confess, and be hanged for his labor, 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 shake me thus. – Pish – Noses, ears, and lips. Is’t possible? Confess – handkerchief! O devil! – (4.1.35–42)

Othello then falls to the ground, in a trance. But his psychosocial dissolution is not, as Iago tells Cassio that it is, the result of epilepsy. The disease was not even so well understood, in Shakespeare’s time, as it is today (and it remains at best uncertainly explainable). But Iago’s bold, pseudo-diagnostic lie is preceded by a more than sufficient rebuttal, out of his own mouth: “My medi-
cine works!” he exclaims, looking down at the unconscious, just-fallen body of Othello (4.1.44). Iago is in truth a “medicine man,” though his is completely black medicine, as he himself is a witch rather than a healer.

And Othello is doomed. The slide into hell has become a rout, and Othello lacks the reserves or the strategic knowledge to deal with forces that, in the end, emerge out his own being. Acts 4 and 5 present some of the saddest, most profoundly pitiful moments of human destruction ever recorded.

**Desdemona**

Aristotle’s definition of “tragedy” is supremely applicable to both Othello and to his wife. “The change from prosperity to adversity should not be represented as happening to a virtuous character,” Aristotle explained. Nor “should the fall of a very bad man from prosperous to adverse fortune be represented.” In other words, no one who is consistently “virtuous” can be the central figure in a true tragedy, but neither can anyone who is utterly without virtue play such a role. Aristotle spoke of the virtuous figure’s downfall being caused by “some error of human frailty”; this has come to be called the “tragic flaw.” And, again, there can be no doubt that Othello, like King Oedipus and a host of tragic heroes after Oedipus, presents a striking instance of exactly that nature. Oedipus is arrogant, wrathful, rash, but has no awareness that he suffers from any of these fatal imperfections. Othello is a social simpleton, a military bull in a civilian china shop, and similarly has no idea of these crucial deficiencies. Both men are resplendent heroes, and both fall like broken statues.

But Desdemona? “Almost all children until the end of the sixteenth century were so conditioned by their upbringing . . . that
they acquiesced without much objection in the matches con-
trived for them by their parents. . . . [Indeed,] the accepted wis-
dom of the age was that marriage based on personal selection, and
thus inevitably influenced by such ephemeral factors as sexual at-
traction or romantic love, was if anything less likely to produce
lasting happiness than one arranged by more prudent and more
mature heads.”13 We have no idea what Shakespeare’s personal
views were, on this or on any other subject, but paternal control
of marriage was a basic component of his time’s culture.

It is not the whole story. Tudor and Stuart England clearly
took a relatively flexible approach. “Gentry marriages were not all
heartlessly commercial or mere dynastic arrangements. . . . The
woman had the option of being more or less tractable, of offering
or withholding affection, of generally signaling her inclinations.
The woman’s role was passive, but not entirely passive.”14 Othello
being an English play, it is less relevant that “the power of the
Italian patrician family over its daughters during the sixteenth
century could be described as absolute.”15 Shakespeare’s audi-
ence was not composed of modern historians, nor did they react
as anything but what they were, Renaissance Englishmen. Never-
theless, “a well-born woman was always defined and identified by
her relation to . . . men: daughter to her father, wife to her hus-
band.”16 Desdemona refers to both her father and her husband as
her “lord,” for “according to tradition as old as the laws and cus-
toms of the Roman, Hebrew, Celtic, and Germanic peoples, by
her marriage a young woman passed from the guardianship of
one male to the guardianship of another.”17

Seen through these lenses, rather than those of the twenty-first
century, Desdemona is virtuous but not entirely innocent, “free
from moral wrong, sin, or guilt.”18 It is her father who presents
her with her first opportunity, in the play at least, for less than innocent behavior:

*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. (1.3.128–31)

Proper young women, especially of prosperous descent, were secluded, kept from contact with non-familial males. Brabantio makes Othello a friend of the family, and Desdemona listens as Othello rehearses “the story of my life.” Though actively concerned with “house affairs,” and drawn away from Othello’s enchanting tales, “These things to hear / Would Desdemona seriously incline” (1.3.145–46). There is of course nothing directly sinful about listening; it is in what follows that the girl strays. Othello notes her “greedy” ear and, taking “once a pliant hour, . . . found good means / To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart / That I would all my pilgrimage dilate, / Whereof by parcels she had something heard, / But not intentively” (1.3.151–55). Carefully following the forms of proper behavior, Othello leads her to ask for more—that is, more stories. “I did consent,” he says (1.3.155).

But he is an unattached man (his precise age is unknown to us, though clearly he is older than Desdemona), and “more” of his life’s story leads, as Othello plainly desires that it would, to other kinds of “more”:

I did consent,
And often did beguile her of her tears,
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 kisses. (1.3.155–59)

xxviii
This much intimacy of male and female is likely to lead to still greater intimacy, as here it does. As Othello himself describes the proceedings, from the perspectives of Shakespeare’s audience such heightened intimacy clearly involves Desdemona in “forward” behavior—presumptuous, bold, immodest:

She swore, in faith, ’twas strange, ’twas passing strange,
’Twas pitiful, ’twas wondrous pitiful.
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:
She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.
(1.3.160–68)

In a strictly formal sense, to be sure, Desdemona may seem to be playing not an active/improper role, here, but a passive one. But as François Hotman observed, in 1573, “If you loose the reins with women, as with an unruly nature and an untamed beast, you must expect uncontrolled actions.”19 Hotman takes the narrowest road, and Shakespeare’s audience surely knew that “even the exigencies of law, of moral prescription, and of social convention, when joined to behavior modification, could not wholly stifle women’s wit, wisdom, shrewishness, and wantonness.”20 “I spake,” says Othello, indicating that he, not she, proposed marriage. Aside from strict formality, however, it is plainly she who has, from the first, taken the initiative.

Nor does either her “boldness” and therefore her culpability stop there. In both custom and law, a woman did not “own” herself. Before marriage, she belonged to her father. After marriage,
she belonged to her husband. Desdemona’s father had the “right” to award his daughter to whatever man he chose for her, and Desdemona plainly anticipated that he would exercise that right and veto her marriage to a black man. She therefore arranged matters, with to be sure Othello’s participation (the play does not specifically inform us of such details), so that the marriage would be clandestine. In a word, she eloped. And having become her husband’s property, as she wishes to be, she “boldly” rejects her father’s claim:

Desdemona My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty.
To you I am bound for life and education.
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you. You are the lord of 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,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor, my lord. (1.3.180–89)

It is a noble speech, to our ears. But four hundred years ago, it surely rang differently in many men’s hearts, as we see that it did for Brabantio. “God be with you,” he responds heavily. “I have done” (1.3.190).

It is impossible to present Shakespeare as an advocate of virtually any clear social or religious position. But on the evidence, as I have argued elsewhere, Shakespeare is the very farthest thing from anti-woman. Indeed, his portraits of women show us, far more often, creatures of much higher intelligence and general capability than the men around them. As an individual, however, Desdemona is inclined to what her time considered boldness, and as a
married woman seeking to influence her husband’s judgment she once again displays that capacity. “I give thee warrant [guarantee]” of thy place, she declares to Cassio in act 3, scene 3:

Assure thee,
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 everything he does
With Cassio’s suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio,
For thy solicitor shall rather die
Than give thy cause away. (3.3.20–28)

She of course means to speak metaphorically, when she vows to “rather die” than abandon his suit for reinstatement. Yet quite as much as any causative factor, it is her “bold” persistence in arguing for Cassio that brings about her death. Human beings are of a piece, Shakespeare shows us in his plays, over and over and over. Desdemona is unrelenting in her way, as Iago is in his. Their ways are very different, as Othello’s way, too, is different from either of theirs. But they are all consistently who they are, for better and for worse.

Iago

Shakespeare’s plays, especially when named for their heroes, generally give those heroes primary stage exposure. In the three later plays bearing their heroes’ names, all of roughly the same vintage, Hamlet is on stage approximately 66 percent of the time (the king, no hero he, is second with 37 percent); Macbeth is on stage just under 60 percent (Lady Macbeth is second, at 30 percent); and Lear is on stage roughly 48 percent of the time (Kent and
Gloucester both being just under 40 percent) However, *Othello* is structured very differently. It is Iago who has the most on-stage time, at approximately 64 percent, and Othello who comes second, with 59 percent.

There is absolutely nothing heroic about Iago. He is not noble, or generous, or kind. He has extraordinary talents—quick wits, high-order verbality, and an infallible nose for other peoples’ weaknesses—but does nothing but evil. His malignity is universal; no one is spared. Morally, he measures at 0 percent on any scale. Nothing and no one, no matter their sex, age, or position, merit his respect. Fanatically self-centered, he is a boaster, a liar, and at the same time a whiner and, remarkably, both a total coward and an incompetent swordsman. Plodding Cassio, even when dead drunk, mercilessly whips Rodrigo, sword in hand, but Iago, face-à-face with Rodrigo, does not so much as scratch him. When he kills Rodrigo, it is in the dark, with the seriously wounded man lying helpless on the ground. Iago is even unable to kill his wife until the other men in the room are preoccupied with Othello, who has tried to run Iago through.

Like many sociopaths, Iago is quixotically fascinating, even at times extremely charming. Measured by the time-honored standard, “Does it hold the stage?” Iago’s ever-restless driving urge to nothingness leaves him, as stage character, smelling of roses. Not only is he non-heroic, and non-moral, but he is also unpredictably irrational. No scheme is ever enough, no goal is ever the final one, since in truth there is no goal. A sociopath does not seek anything except the venting of his malignancy. On the verge of having successfully ruined Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio, Iago declares at the end of act 5, scene 1, “This is the night / That either makes me or fordoes me quite” (lines 128–29). Yet what suc-
In the introduction, what fortune can he conceivably attain to? He had begun by wanting, he says, to despoil Rodrigo and displace Cassio. He has in fact long since done both, and the fact is, for him, of no significance. At the end of act 5, scene 1, he is preparing to have Desdemona killed, a murder which will have to destroy Othello. What possible gain is there for Iago, either in Desdemona’s death or Othello’s destruction? He cannot replace either one of them, as he has declared he wanted to do with Cassio; he cannot inherit from either of them. Indeed, without Othello as temporary governor of Cyprus, Iago will be left without any post at all and would, presumably, be obliged to return, jobless, to Venice. What has he done with Roderigo’s money? We are never given so much as a hint—because, to this consummate villain, all such considerations are irrelevant. At age twenty-eight (as he says), he has nowhere to go but down, and that is the only direction he knows. Like the prototypical serial killers of our own time, he lives exclusively for the evil he does. Compared to Iago, King Kong is a romantic, Holofernes a good soldier with a tad too much testosterone, and Attila the Hun a restless rambler. Only the white whale, Moby-Dick, matches him in an inexorable drive toward destruction. And like Moby-Dick, Iago is utterly fascinating, completely compelling.

How can we resist watching this matchless spinner of wickedness weave his webs? Iago richly deserves the prime time his author (no dramatic fool, he!) has given him, as Iago will richly deserve everything that happens to him once the stage goes dark.

The Text

There are two almost exactly contemporaneous printed versions of Othello, a separate Quarto edition that appeared in 1622 and
the collective Folio edition of 1623. The play was written somewhere between 1601 and 1604 and performed many times, over the next two decades (though we do not have a full record). Shakespeare died in 1616. Half of his plays, more or less, appeared in print during his lifetime, but he seems to have played no role in those publications. There is no detectable pattern in which plays were published, before 1623, and which were not. Publication would not have been of much importance to him: neither his professional life nor his literary reputation was dependent on books, except as a source of plots.

Shakespeare’s longtime theatrical associates were responsible for the 1623 Folio, which appears to have been compiled from documents long in possession of the acting company. It is not known from what resources the 1622 Quarto was printed. The Quarto is a significantly shorter version, particularly in the last two acts, and there are also a good many differences in wording.

I am fully persuaded that Scott McMillin’s carefully cautious “solution” to Othello’s textual uncertainties is as close to a definitive formulation as we are likely ever to have. After an exceedingly close and knowledgeable examination, Professor McMillin believes that

1. The 1622 Quarto was of relatively late date;
2. The Quarto was written, in the first place, by a professional scribe (“stenographer”) who had only his ears to guide him—this being, on the evidence, a fairly common practice, though we have no idea who the scribe was or who employed him;
3. The Quarto was thereafter “corrected,” though we do not know when or by whom;
4. Many of the Quarto’s longish cuts conform to theatrical practice and do not represent Shakespeare’s text;
5. Many, even most of the verbal changes correspond to actor-originated alterations in Shakespeare’s text; and
6. There may well be compositor (“printer”) errors in either or both printed versions of the play, but printer error cannot be the sole or the major cause of textual differences.

I have therefore used the 1623 Folio as my “copy” text—that is, the basic source of the play. I have occasionally, in small verbal matters, chosen the Quarto text, and so indicated in a footnote. Brian Gibbons, general editor of the Cambridge series in which McMillin’s Quarto edition appears, puts the editorial process into a blunt, clear perspective: “There is no avoiding edited Shakespeare . . . there is no direct access to Shakespeare’s play-manuscripts—there is only print, and this implies editing,” given the nature of our printed sources.21

Notes
5. Gerzina, Black London, 205nn. 2, 3, 7.
The Stage

• There was no *scenery* (backdrops, flats, and so on).

• Compared to today’s elaborate, high-tech productions, the Elizabethan stage had few *on-stage* props. These were mostly handheld: a sword or dagger, a torch or candle, a cup or flask. Larger props, such as furniture, were used sparingly.

• Costumes (some of which were upper-class castoffs, belonging to the individual actors) were elaborate. As in most premodern and very hierarchical societies, clothing was the distinctive mark of who and what a person was.

• What the actors *spoke*, accordingly, contained both the dramatic and narrative material we have come to expect in a theater (or movie house) and (1) the setting, including details of the time of day, the weather, and so on, and (2) the occasion. The dramaturgy is thus very different from that of our own time, requiring much more attention to verbal and gestural matters. Strict realism was neither intended nor, under the circumstances, possible.

• There was no *curtain*. Actors entered and left via doors in the
back of the stage, behind which was the “tiring-room,” where actors put on or changed their costumes.

• In public theaters (which were open-air structures), there was no lighting; performances could take place only in daylight hours.

• For private theaters, located in large halls of aristocratic houses, candlelight illumination was possible.

The Actors

• Actors worked in professional, for-profit companies, sometimes organized and owned by other actors, and sometimes by entrepreneurs who could afford to erect or rent the company’s building. Public theaters could hold, on average, two thousand playgoers, most of whom viewed and listened while standing. Significant profits could be and were made. Private theaters were smaller, more exclusive.

• There was no director. A book-holder/prompter/props manager, standing in the tiring-room behind the backstage doors, worked from a text marked with entrances and exits and notations of any special effects required for that particular script. A few such books have survived. Actors had texts only of their own parts, speeches being cued to a few prior words. There were few and often no rehearsals, in our modern use of the term, though there was often some coaching of individuals. Since Shakespeare’s England was largely an oral culture, actors learned their parts rapidly and retained them for years. This was repertory theater, repeating popular plays and introducing some new ones each season.

• Women were not permitted on the professional stage. Most
female roles were acted by boys; elderly women were played by grown men.

The Audience

- London’s professional theater operated in what might be called a “red-light” district, featuring brothels, restaurants, and the kind of open-air entertainment then most popular, like bear-baiting (in which a bear, tied to a stake, was set on by dogs).

- A theater audience, like most of the population of Shakespeare’s England, was largely made up of illiterates. Being able to read and write, however, had nothing to do with intelligence or concern with language, narrative, and characterization. People attracted to the theater tended to be both extremely verbal and extremely volatile. Actors were sometimes attacked, when the audience was dissatisfied; quarrels and fights were relatively common. Women were regularly in attendance, though no reliable statistics exist.

- Drama did not have the cultural esteem it has in our time, and plays were not regularly printed. Shakespeare’s often appeared in book form, but not with any supervision or other involvement on his part. He wrote a good deal of nondramatic poetry as well, yet so far as we know he did not authorize or supervise any work of his that appeared in print during his lifetime.

Othello
CHARACTERS (DRAMATIS PERSONAE)

Othello (the Moor)
Brabantio (Senator of Venice, Desdemona’s father)
Gratiano (Brabantio’s brother, Desdemona’s uncle)
Lodovico (Desdemona’s cousin)
Duke (of Venice)
Senators (of Venice)
Cassio (Othello’s lieutenant)
Iago (Othello’s ancient)
Rodrigo (Venetian gentleman)
Montano (Governor of Cyprus, Othello’s predecessor)
Sailors
Clown
Herald
Desdemona (Brabantio’s daughter, Othello’s wife)
Emilia (Iago’s wife, Desdemona’s maid)
Bianca (courtesan, Cassio’s mistress)
Officers, Gentlemen, Messenger, Musicians, Attendants

1 Gratiano’s son?
2 second in command*
3 ensign, standard-bearer*
4 ceremonial message-bearer
Act 1

SCENE I
Vénice. A street.

enter Roderigo and Iago

Roderigo  Never¹ tell me, I take it much unkindly²
          That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
          As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.³

Iago  But you will not⁴ hear me. If ever I did dream⁵
       Of such a matter, abhor⁶ me.

Roderigo  Thou told’st me
          Thou didst hold him⁷ in thy hate.⁸

Iago  Despise⁹ me

¹ don’t (emphatic)
² much unkindly = with great dissatisfaction/resentment
³ Desdemona’s elopement with Othello
⁴ will not = don’t want to
⁵ but you WILL not HEAR me if EVER I did DREAM
⁶ loathe, hate
⁷ hold him = keep/bear Othello
⁸ THOU toldst ME / THOU didst HOLD him IN thy HATE
⁹ have contempt for, scorn
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 bumbast circumstance, Horribly stuffed with epithets of war, Nonsuits my mediators. For “Certes,” says he, “I have already chose my officer.” And what was he? Forsooth, a great arithmetician, One Michael Cassio, a Florentine, A fellow almost damned in a fair wife.
That never set a squadron in the field, 
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster, unless the bookish theorist,
Wherein the togèd consuls can propose
As masterly as he. Mere prattle, without practice,
Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had th’election,
And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds,
Christian and heathen, must be be-lee’d and calmed
By debitor 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,

Preferment goes by letter and affection, And not by 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.

_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 Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave.

---

50 bless the mark = save us from the (1) event, happening, (2) fool, ninny, naive incompetent, (3) people like him (Cassio)
51 Othello’s (a sarcastic pun on the then familiar usage, “bless his worship,” his “honor”)
52 (Roderigo, fancying himself Othello’s rival for Desdemona’s hand, swears that he would rather have killed than served Othello)
53 serving a master/employer*
54 promotion
55 letter and affection = rules and influence
56 old gradation = the former tradition of length in service and stage-by-stage progress
57 number two in rank
58 number one in rank
59 just term = correct/honorable* sense of the word
60 bound
61 serve
62 content you = be satisfied
63 my turn upon = my own needs/purposes on/by means of
64 loyally, faithfully*
65 note, notice, observe*
66 submissive, obedient
67 knee-crooking knave = bowing and scraping rascal* (Many a DOOTyus 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, 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. 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,

68 doting on = foolishly infatuated by 69 obsequious bondage = dutiful/submissive servitude 70 wears out his time = wastes his life 71 donkey (in British usage, “arse” = the rear end of a human being) 72 food/fodder 73 is dismissed 74 whip me = as for me, whip/flog (whipping subordinates was more or less universal) 75 prepared, skilled 76 forms and visages = patterns/methods and appearances 77 respect, deference, submission* 78 attending on = doing service to 79 throwing but = casting/tossing/delivering only* 80 appearances* 81 flourish, prosper* 82 do WELL thrive BY them and WHEN they’ve LINED their COATS 83 do themselves homage = declare allegiance to themselves (do THEMselves HOMage) 84 intellectual/spiritual power (“life in them”) 85 certain, trustworthy* 86 for SIR it IS as SURE as YOU are roDRIgo 87 on account of
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  
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’t thus!

*Iago*  Call up her father,  
Rouse him, make after him, poison his delight,  
Proclaim him in the streets. Incense her kinsmen,  
And though he in a fertile climate dwell,  
Plague him with flies. Though that his joy be joy,  
Yet throw such changes of vexation on’t  

---

88 peculiar end = private/independent goal/purpose  
89 manifest (deMONstrate)  
90 native act and figure = natural/unadorned deed and attitude/bearing  
91 complement extern = outward fullness/completion/totality  
92 'tis not = it will not be  
93 jackdaws, a type of crow  
94 seem to be  
95 solid, large  
96 own, possess  
97 can carry’t = could carry it off  
98 call up = wake up  
99 rouse him = stir him up  
100 make after = pursue  
101 proclaim him = make his name known  
102 Brabantio  
103 a fertile climate = an environment of abundance (he is rich and lives richly)  
104 afflict, torment  
105 winged insects  
106 though that = even if  
107 changes of vexation on’t = on it variations/modulations of harassment/distress
As it may lose some color.  

_Roderigo_ Here is her father’s house, I’ll call aloud.

_Iago_ Do, with like timorous accent¹⁰⁹ and dire¹¹⁰ yell
As when, by night and negligence, the fire¹¹¹
Is spied in populous cities.

_Roderigo_ What ho, Brabantio, Signior Brabantio, ho!

_Iago_ Awake, what, ho, Brabantio! Thieves, thieves, thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags¹¹²
Thieves, thieves!

**BRABANTIO APPEARS ABOVE, AT A WINDOW**

_Brabantio_ What is the reason of this terrible summons?¹¹³
What is the matter there?

_Roderigo_ Signior, is all your family within?

_Iago_ Are your doors locked?

_Brabantio_ Why, wherefore¹¹⁴ ask you this?

_Iago_ Zounds,¹¹⁵ sir, you’re robbed, for shame, put on your gown,¹¹⁶
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul,
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram

---

¹⁰⁸ tone, character, virtue
¹⁰⁹ like timorous accent = the same fearful/dreadful voice/sound
¹¹⁰ horrible, dismal
¹¹¹ the fire = fire
¹¹² money bags (money meant coins; paper currency was not used)
¹¹³ terrible summons = dreadful/violent call/command
¹¹⁴ for what purpose/reason??
¹¹⁵ by God’s wounds
¹¹⁶ (1) loose shirt-like garment, (2) senator’s gown, (3) dressing gown (from stage direction in the Quarto, line 157)
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise,
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
Arise, I say.

90 Brabantio What, have you lost your wits?
Roderigo Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?
Brabantio Not I. What are you?
Roderigo My name is Roderigo.
Brabantio The worser welcome.
I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors.

95 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,
Upon malicious knavery 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.

117 copulating with
118 innocent, virginal
119 snoring
120 minds*
121 respected
122 who
123 ordered
124 decent
125 folly
126 distempering draughts = deranging/disordering/intoxicating drinks
127 malicious knavery = wicked roguery/dishonest tricks
128 (1) attack, (2) startle
129 peace, repose?
130 disposition, attitude, character
Brabantio What tell’st thou me of robbing? This is Venice, My house is not a grange.131

Roderigo Most grave132 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 we are ruffians, you’ll have your daughter covered133 with a Barbary134 horse, you’ll have your nephews neigh to you, you’ll have coursers135 for cousins and gennets for germens.136

Brabantio What profane wretch137 art thou?

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

Brabantio Thou art a villain.138

Iago You are – a senator.

Brabantio This thou shalt answer.139 I know thee, Roderigo.
Roderigo Sir, I will answer anything. But, I beseech140 you,
If’t be your pleasure141 and most wise consent,
As partly I find142 it is, that your fair143 daughter,
At this odd-even144 and dull watch145 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 —

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,
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.

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,164 ho!  
Give me a taper,165 call up all my people!166  
This accident167 is not unlike my dream,  
Belief of it oppresses168 me already.  
Light, I say, light!

*exit Brabantio from above*

*Iago*  
(to Roderigo) Farewell, for I must leave you.  
It seems not meet,169 nor wholesome170 to my place  
To be produced,171 as if I stay I shall,  
Against the Moor, for I do know the state,172  
However this may gall173 him with some check,174  
Cannot with safety cast175 him. For he’s embarked176  
With such loud reason177 to178 the Cyprus wars,
ACT I • SCENE I

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

enter Brabantio and Servants with torches

Brabantio  It is too true an evil. Gone she is,
And what’s to come of my despised time
Is naught 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
Past thought. What said she to you? (to Servants) Get more tapers.

Roderigo  Truly, I think they are.

179 stands in act = remains/continues ongoing/in process
180 ability
181 BlziNESS
182 show out = display, unfurl
183 but sign = only a pretense
184 house/inn marked by the sign of Sagittarius, a centaur (SAdgiTAreC)
185 raised search = roused-up search for Othello and/or Desdemona
186 certain, genuine
187 ill-fated, unlucky, miserable in lot
188 rouse*
Brabantio  O heaven! How got she out? O treason of the blood!\textsuperscript{189}
   Fathers, from hence\textsuperscript{190} trust not your daughters’ minds
   By what you see them act. Is\textsuperscript{191} there not charms\textsuperscript{192}
   By which the property\textsuperscript{193} of youth and maidhood
   May be abused?\textsuperscript{194} Have you not read, Roderigo,
   Of some such thing?
Roderigo  Yes, sir, I have indeed.
Brabantio  (to Servants) Call up my brother. (to Roderigo) O, would
   you had had her!\textsuperscript{195}
   Some one way, some another. Do you know
   Where we may apprehend\textsuperscript{196} her and the Moor?
Roderigo  I think I can discover\textsuperscript{197} him, if you please
   To get good guard,\textsuperscript{198} and go along with me.
Brabantio  Pray you,\textsuperscript{199} lead on. At every house I’ll call,\textsuperscript{200}
   I may command\textsuperscript{201} at most. (to Servants) Get weapons, ho,
   And raise some special officers of night.\textsuperscript{202}
   On, good Roderigo. I’ll deserve your pains.\textsuperscript{203}

\textit{Exeunt}
SCENE 2

Venice. Another street.

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

Othello 'Tis better as it is.

Iago

Nay, but he prated, and spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
Against your honor, that with the little godliness I have,
I did full hard forbear him. But I pray you, sir,
Are you fast married? Be assured of this,
That the Magnifico is much beloved,
And hath in his effect a voice potential

1 course (“way of life”)
2 substance
3 moral sense, inner knowledge of right and wrong
4 cleverly/artfully planned (CONtrived)
5 wickedness, sinfulness
6 help, benefit
7 yerked him = struck Roderigo (with a dagger or knife)
8 chattered*
9 contemptible, shabby, discourteous
10 piety, devoutness
11 (lineation uncertain: this edition follows the Folio)
12 endure
13 firmly, securely
14 Venetian noble title (Brabantio)
15 influence, power
16 as powerful/strong (an adjective; modern usage would be “potentially”)
As double as the Duke’s. He will divorce you,
Or put upon you what restraint and grievance
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 honor,
I shall promulgate — I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reached. For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition

17 as double as = twice as much as
18 divorce you = have you divorced, dissolve your marriage
19 whatever
20 restraint and grievance = limitation/constraint and oppression/hardship
21 (although “his” can mean “its,” here it means his, Brabantio’s)
22 strengthen, intensify
23 rope
24 insult, reproach, injury
25 signiory = Venice’s governing council (in Italian, signoria)
26 exceed
27 yet to know = as yet unknown
28 something that
29 declare publicly
30 obtain, get
31 rank, class
32 merits
33 speak unbonneted = (?) declare respectfully
34 except
35 well-born
36 bachelor
37 life, mode of being, state
Put into circumscription and confine\textsuperscript{38}  
For the sea’s worth. But look, what lights come yond?\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{Iago} Those are the raisèd father and his friends.  
You were best go in.

\textit{Othello} Not I. I must be found.

My parts,\textsuperscript{40} my title, and my perfect\textsuperscript{41} soul  
Shall manifest\textsuperscript{42} me rightly. Is it they?

\textit{Iago} By Janus,\textsuperscript{43} I think no.

\textbf{enter Cassio and Officers with torches}

\textit{Othello} The servants of the Duke? And my lieutenant?  
The goodness of the night upon you, friends!  
What is the news?

\textit{Cassio} The Duke does greet\textsuperscript{44} you, general,  
And he requires\textsuperscript{45} your haste – post-haste\textsuperscript{46} – appearance  
Even\textsuperscript{47} on the instant.\textsuperscript{48}

\textit{Othello} What is the matter,\textsuperscript{49} think you?

\textit{Cassio} Something from Cyprus, as\textsuperscript{50} I may divine.\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 38 circumscription and confine = restraint/limitation and confinement
  \item 39 yonder, over there
  \item 40 qualities, character*
  \item 41 completely prepared/ready, pure
  \item 42 reveal, be evidence of, prove
  \item 43 Roman god of entrances and exits, two-faced, his heads looking in opposite directions (DJEYnis)
  \item 44 does greet = greets (do = an intensifier)
  \item 45 requests, desires
  \item 46 all possible speed
  \item 47 precisely, exactly*
  \item 48 on the instant = instantly (even ON the INstant; “even” was often pronounced EEN)
  \item 49 issue, substance
  \item 50 as far as
  \item 51 make out, guess
\end{itemize}
It is a business of some heat. The galleys 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, 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 Othello*

*Cassio*  
Ancient, what makes he here?

*lago*  
Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land carack. If it prove lawful prize, he’s made forever.

52 excitement, intensity  
53 low, flat–built Mediterranean ship, with both oars and sails  
54 following one on the other  
55 exact, same  
56 having met/assembled  
57 hotly called for = ardently/eagerly requested/required  
58 at which point  
59 out (as in “out and about”)  
60 several quests = separate search parties  
61 have been  
62 speak, say  
63 (where Desdemona, now his wife, is lodged)  
64 and then  
65 makes he = is he doing  
66 truly  
67 attacked  
68 large ship (galleon), often employed in the rich trade with the East  
69 turn out to be*  
70 capture, seizure
ACT I • SCENE 2

Cassio  I do not understand.

Iago  He’s married.

Cassio  To who?

enter Othello

Iago  Marry, to – Come, captain,71 will you go?

Othello  Have with you.72

Cassio  Here comes another troop73 to seek for you.

Iago  It is Brabantio. General, be advised,74 He comes to bad intent.

enter Brabantio, Roderigo, and Officers with torches and weapons

55  Othello  Holla,75 stand76 there.

Roderigo  (to Brabantio) Signior, it is the Moor.

Brabantio  Down with him, thief!

both sides draw swords

Iago  You, Roderigo, come sir, I am for you.77

Othello  Keep up78 your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.

Good signior, you shall more command with years

71 general (military terms were not so standardized as they are now)
72 have with you = let’s go (“I will go with you”)
73 party, company, group
74 warned
75 halt (exclamation)
76 stay, stop*
77 am for you = am ready to fight with you
78 keep up = put back, confine
Than with your weapons.

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 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, to incur a general mock, Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom Of such a thing as thou – to fear, not to delight. Judge me the world, if ’tis not gross in sense That thou hast practiced on her with foul charms, Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals

79 lodged, put
80 refer me to = put my trust in
81 perception, awareness
82 unmarried/virginal young woman*
83 (1) delicate, soft, sensitive, (2) youthful, immature, (3) dearly loved
84 reputable, unstained, pure
85 fortunate, favored (having good “hap”)
86 against, hostile
87 curlèd darlings = favorites with artificial curls
88 (“nation” had cultural and racial rather than political meaning; Venice was not a nation but a city-state)
89 whether she would
90 general mock = common/universal derision/contempt*
91 sheltered existence (“guardianship”)
92 breast, heart*
93 a thing to be afraid of
94 judge me the world = let/may the world judge me
95 gross in sense = obvious
96 worked
97 mineral-derived drugs/poisons*
That weaken motion. I’ll have’t disputed on — ’Tis probable, and palpable to thinking.
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee
For an abuser of the world, a practicer
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.
Lay hold upon him. If he do resist,
Subdue him at his peril.

80 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?

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

Othello What if I do obey?
How may the Duke be therewith satisfied,
Whose messengers are here about my side
Upon some present business of the state,

98 activity of body and mind
99 disputed on = contested, challenged
100 plain, obvious
101 arrest
102 indict
103 arts inhibited = forbidden studies/learning
104 out of warrant = unlawful
105 hold your hands = desist/keep back your hands
106 party, following
107 wish
108 accusation
109 proper, appropriate
110 procedures
111 direct session = a court in regular (not specially summoned) session
112 urgent, immediate
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,
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,
Bond slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.

Exeunt
Act 1 • Scene 3

Scene 3
Venice. A council chamber.

Duke and Senators at council table. Officers and Attendants

Duke There is no composition\(^1\) in these news
That gives them\(^2\) credit.\(^3\)

Senator 1 Indeed, they are disproportioned.\(^4\)
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.\(^5\)

Duke And mine a hundred and forty.

Senator 2 And mine two hundred.

But though they jump\(^6\) not on a just account\(^7\) –
As in these cases, where the aim\(^8\) reports,
"Tis oft with difference – yet do they all confirm
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up\(^9\) to Cyprus.

Duke Nay, it is possible enough to judgment.\(^10\)
I do not so secure me in\(^11\) the error,
But the main article\(^12\) I do approve\(^13\)
In fearful\(^14\) sense.

---

1 order, arrangement
2 "news" is plural
3 believability, credibility, trustworthiness
4 inconsistent
5 Turkish/enemy ships (though both sides employ galleys)
6 coincide/agree exactly*
7 just account = equal account
8 conjecture, guess
9 bearing up = keeping/sustaining a course
10 come to a conclusion/decision/deliberate opinion
11 secure me in = feel entirely safe* about
12 chief/most important/leading portion/part/matter
13 pronounce to be good, accept*
14 in fearful sense = with a dreadful/frightening* perception/sensation
Sailor (Within) What ho, what ho, what ho!

Officer A messenger from the galleys.  

**enter Sailor**

*Duke* Now what’s the business?

*Sailor* The Turkish preparation\(^{16}\) makes for Rhodes.\(^{17}\) So was I bid report here to the state By Signior Angelo.\(^{18}\)

*Duke* (to Senators) How say you by\(^{19}\) this change?

*Senator* This cannot be, By no assay of reason.\(^{20}\) ’Tis a pageant\(^{21}\) To keep us in false gaze.\(^{22}\) When we consider The importancy of Cyprus to the Turk, And let ourselves again but\(^{23}\) understand That, as it\(^{24}\) more concerns the Turk than Rhodes, So may he\(^{25}\) with more facile question bear it,\(^{26}\) For that\(^{27}\) it stands not in such warlike brace,\(^{28}\)

---

15 Venetian ships  
16 expedition, fleet  
17 island in the Aegean Sea, W/SW of Turkey  
18 first name of the interim Governor of Cyprus, Montano (?)  
19 how say you by = what do you say about  
20 assay of reason = process/trial\(^*\) of thought/good sense  
21 trick, deception  
22 false gaze = looking in the wrong direction  
23 again but = further/once more/moreover just  
24 Cyprus  
25 the Turk  
26 more facile question bear it = easier strife win/carry/conquer it (*O.E.D.*, s.v. “question,” 4)  
27 for that = because  
28 preparation/defense
But altogether lacks the abilities\textsuperscript{29} that Rhodes is dressed in.\textsuperscript{30} If we make thought of this, we must not think the Turk is so unskillful to leave that latest\textsuperscript{31} which concerns him first, neglecting an attempt of ease and gain,\textsuperscript{32} to wake\textsuperscript{33} and wage\textsuperscript{34} a danger profitless.

Duke Nay, in all confidence,\textsuperscript{35} he's\textsuperscript{36} not for Rhodes.

Officer Here is more news.

\textbf{enter Messenger}

\textit{Messenger} The Ottomites,\textsuperscript{37} reverend and gracious, steering with due\textsuperscript{38} course toward the isle of Rhodes, have there injointed them\textsuperscript{39} with an after\textsuperscript{40} fleet.

Senator 1 Ay, so I thought. How many,\textsuperscript{41} as you guess? Messenger Of thirty sail.\textsuperscript{42} And now they do re-stem\textsuperscript{43} their backward course, bearing with frank\textsuperscript{44} 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.

*Duke* ’Tis certain, then, for Cyprus.

Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?

*Senator* He’s now in Florence.

*Duke* Write from us to him, post-post-haste despatch.

*Senator* Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

**enter Brabantio, Othello, 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, We lacked your counsel and your help tonight.

*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 Is of so floodgate and o’erbearing nature That it engluts and swallows other sorrows, And it is still itself.

---

45 (1) great, (2) voluntary, willing, open
46 reports, informs
47 the Greek name suggests someone of Cypriot origin, with useful on-site information
48 MARcos luCHIcos IS not HE in TOWN
49 speed
50 general enemy = universal enemy (for Christian Europeans)
51 concern, anxiety
52 personal, private
53 floodgate and o’erbearing = strongly streaming/torrential and overwhelming,
overpowering
54 gulps down
Duke Why, what’s the matter?

Brabantio My daughter! O, my daughter!

Duke and Senators Dead?

Brabantio Ay, to me.

She is abused, stol’n from me, and corrupted
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,
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.

---

55 stoln FROM me
56 drugs
57 itinerant quacks/charlatans
58 a character/disposition
59 irrationally, monstrously, perversely
60 go astray
61 defective
62 without (French)
63 could not = could not be, is impossible
64 cheated, deceived*
65 (fathers had legally recognized possession of unmarried daughters; after marriage, possession passed to husbands)
66 bloody book of law = bloodshed-imposing legal code/set of laws
67 read in the bitter letter = interpret/declare the hard/dire/severe words/statutes
68 according to
69 our proper = my own (the royal “we”)
70 were the accused person
71 legal proceeding
Here is the man, this Moor, whom now, it seems, Your special mandate for the state affairs brought.

*Duke and Senators* We are very sorry for't.

*Duke* (to *Othello*) What, in your own part, can you say to this?

*Brabantio* Nothing, but this is so.

*Othello* Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors, My very noble and approved good masters. That I have ta’en away this old man’s daughter, It is most true; true, I have married her. The very head and front of my offending 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.

---

72 special mandate = particular/distinct command/order  
73 the state affairs = affairs of state  
74 here = in your own part  
75 in your own part = in your own interest, on your own side  
76 powerful, mighty  
77 esteemed  
78 chiefs, rulers (“employers”)  
79 head and front = summit, highest extent  
80 offense, transgression  
81 size  
82 unsophisticated, unlearned, barbarous, rough  
83 pleasant, agreeable, smooth  
84 substance, strength  
85 moons wasted = months past/unused (he has not been engaged in war for the past nine months)  
86 performed, carried on  
87 most honorable/worthy  
88 tented field = battlefield (where soldiers live in tents)
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
Of my whole course of love, what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration, and what mighty magic –
For such proceeding I am charged withal –
I won his daughter.

Brabantio
A maiden never bold,
Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion
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 judgment maimed and most imperfect
That will confess perfection so could err
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven

89 turmoil
90 embellish, adorn
91 full, complete
92 speak
93 with what
94 invoking of spirits
95 likewise, moreover
96 (1) habitually silent, subdued, meek, (2) calm, unruffled
97 emotions, desires
98 the difference in years
99 race, culture
100 it is = only a
101 deficient, crippled
102 incomplete
103 declare, concede, admit
104 completeness, finished/grown/matured excellence
105 and therefore
To find out practices of cunning hell,
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,
He wrought upon her.

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

Senator 1 But, Othello, speak.
Did you by indirect and forced 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,
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\textsuperscript{120} I do hold of\textsuperscript{121} you,
Not only take away, but let your sentence\textsuperscript{122}
Even fall upon my life.

\textit{Duke} Fetch Desdemona hither.

\textit{Othello} Ancient, conduct\textsuperscript{123} them. You best know the place.

\texttt{exeunt Iago and Attendants}

And till she come, as truly as to heaven
I do confess the vices of my blood,\textsuperscript{124}
So justly\textsuperscript{125} to your grave ears I'll present\textsuperscript{126}
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love,
And she in mine.

\textit{Duke} Say it, Othello.

\textit{Othello} Her father loved me, oft invited me,
Still\textsuperscript{127} questioned me the story\textsuperscript{128} of my life,
From year to year – the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have passed.\textsuperscript{129}
I ran it through, even from my boyish days
To th'very moment that he bade me tell it.
Wherein\textsuperscript{130} I spake of most disastrous chances,\textsuperscript{131}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} post, employment, service, duty\
  \item \textsuperscript{121} from\
  \item \textsuperscript{122} judgment\
  \item \textsuperscript{123} guide, lead\
  \item \textsuperscript{124} vices of my blood = moral defects/sins of my disposition/emotions
    (Othello here, as elsewhere, declares himself a practicing Christian)
  \item \textsuperscript{125} truthfully, correctly\
  \item \textsuperscript{126} describe, set forth\
  \item \textsuperscript{127} always\
  \item \textsuperscript{128} the story = about the story/history\
  \item \textsuperscript{129} experienced, gone through\
  \item \textsuperscript{130} in telling that story\
  \item \textsuperscript{131} disastrous chances = unfortunate/ill-fated events/circumstances\
\end{itemize}
Of moving accidents by flood and field, Of hair-breadth scapes i’ the imminent deadly breach, Of being taken by the insolent foe And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence And portance in my traveler’s history, Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle, Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven, It was my hint to speak. Such was my process. And of the cannibals that each other eat – The anthropophagi – and men whose heads Grew beneath their shoulders. These things to hear Would Desdemona seriously incline. But still the house affairs would draw her hence. 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\textsuperscript{148} hour, and found good means\textsuperscript{149} to draw from her a prayer\textsuperscript{150} of earnest\textsuperscript{151} heart that I would all my pilgrimage dilate,\textsuperscript{152} whereof by parcels\textsuperscript{153} she had something heard, but not intentionally.\textsuperscript{154} I did consent, and often did beguile her of\textsuperscript{155} her tears, when I did speak of some distressful stroke\textsuperscript{156} that my youth suffered. My story being done,\textsuperscript{157} she gave me for my pains a world of kisses.\textsuperscript{158} She swore, in faith, ‘twas strange, ‘twas passing\textsuperscript{159} strange, ‘twas pitiful, ‘twas wondrous pitiful. 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: She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity\textsuperscript{160} them. This only is the witchcraft I have used.

\textsuperscript{148} suitable, apt
\textsuperscript{149} methods, ways\textsuperscript{*}
\textsuperscript{150} request, petition
\textsuperscript{151} of earnest = made with serious/ardent
\textsuperscript{152} pilgrimage dilate = travels describe/set forth at length
\textsuperscript{153} parts, units
\textsuperscript{154} with full attention
\textsuperscript{155} beguile her of = win/draw/charm from her
\textsuperscript{156} blow, painful/injurious occurrence
\textsuperscript{157} finished\textsuperscript{*}
\textsuperscript{158} light touch of the lips, as still practiced in Continental greeting (Quarto: sighs)
\textsuperscript{159} surpassingly, extremely
\textsuperscript{160} feel sorry/grieve/compassion for
Here comes the lady. Let her witness\textsuperscript{161} it.

\textbf{enter Desdemona, Iago, and Attendants}

\textit{Duke} \hspace{0.5em} I think this tale would win my daughter too.
\textit{Good Brabantio,} \hspace{0.5em} Take up this mangled\textsuperscript{162} matter at the best.\textsuperscript{163} 
\textit{Men do their broken weapons\textsuperscript{164} rather use} 
\textit{Than their bare hands.} 

\textit{Brabantio} \hspace{0.5em} I pray you, hear her speak.
\textit{If she confess that she was half the wooer,} 
\textit{Destruction on my head if my bad\textsuperscript{165} blame} 
\textit{Light\textsuperscript{166} on the man. Come hither, gentle mistress.\textsuperscript{167}} 
\textit{Do you perceive in all this noble company} 
\textit{Where most you owe obedience?\textsuperscript{168}} 

\textit{Desdemona} \hspace{0.5em} My noble father, 
\textit{I do perceive here a divided duty.} 
\textit{To you I am bound\textsuperscript{169} for life and education.\textsuperscript{170}} 
\textit{My life and education both do learn me} 
\textit{How to respect you. You are the lord of duty,} 
\textit{I am hitherto\textsuperscript{171} your daughter. But here’s my husband,} 
\textit{And so much duty as my mother showed}

\textsuperscript{161} testify to 
\textsuperscript{162} chopped up, confused 
\textsuperscript{163} at the best = in the best way possible 
\textsuperscript{164} (meaning that he remains, at least, her father?) 
\textsuperscript{165} defective, faulty, incorrect 
\textsuperscript{166} descend, fall 
\textsuperscript{167} (before her elopement and marriage, he would have addressed he as “miss”; 
\hspace{1em} mistress = the full original form of the modern abbreviation, “Mrs.”)
\textsuperscript{168} oBEEDyuns 
\textsuperscript{169} obliged, indebted 
\textsuperscript{170} rearing, bringing up 
\textsuperscript{171} until now
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor, my lord.

Brabantio
God be with you. 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.
I here do give thee that with all my heart
Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
I would keep from thee. (to Desdemona) For your sake, jewel,
I am glad at soul I have no other child,
For thy escape would teach me tyranny,
To hang clogs on them. (to Duke) 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 favor.
When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
To mourn a mischief\textsuperscript{185} that is past and gone
Is the next\textsuperscript{186} way to draw new mischief on.
What cannot be preserved when fortune takes,
Patience her injury\textsuperscript{187} a mockery makes.
The robbed that smiles\textsuperscript{188} steals something from the thief.
He robs himself that spends\textsuperscript{189} a bootless\textsuperscript{190} grief.

\textit{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
But the free comfort\textsuperscript{191} which from thence\textsuperscript{192} he hears.
But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
That, to\textsuperscript{193} pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.
These sentences, to sugar or to gall,\textsuperscript{195}
Being strong on both sides, are equivocal.\textsuperscript{196}
But words are words: I never yet did hear
That the bruised heart was pierced through the ears.
I humbly beseech you, proceed to th’affairs of state.

\textit{Duke}  The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for
Cyprus. Othello, the fortitude\textsuperscript{197} of the place is best known

\textsuperscript{185} evil, misfortune
\textsuperscript{186} shortest, most direct
\textsuperscript{187} loss, harm
\textsuperscript{188} the robbed that smiles = he who, being robbed, smiles
\textsuperscript{189} expends, wastes words/time on
\textsuperscript{190} remediless, incurable, useless
\textsuperscript{191} free comfort = (1) noble/generous, (2) unrestricted, allowable
\textsuperscript{192} encouragement/support* (Brabantio speaks carefully tongue-in-cheek)
\textsuperscript{193} that, to = who, in order to
\textsuperscript{194} from
\textsuperscript{195} bile, bitterness
\textsuperscript{196} ambiguous
\textsuperscript{197} strength, fortified state
to you. And though we have there a substitute\textsuperscript{198} of most allowed sufficiency,\textsuperscript{199} yet opinion,\textsuperscript{200} a sovereign\textsuperscript{201} mistress of effects,\textsuperscript{202} throws a more safer voice\textsuperscript{203} on you. You must therefore be content to slubber the gloss\textsuperscript{204} of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous\textsuperscript{205} expedition.\textsuperscript{206}

\textit{Othello} The tyrant custom, most grave senators,

Hath made the flinty and steel couch\textsuperscript{207} of war

My thrice-driven\textsuperscript{208} bed of down. I do agnize\textsuperscript{209}

A natural\textsuperscript{210} and prompt alacrity\textsuperscript{211}

I find in hardness,\textsuperscript{212} and do undertake\textsuperscript{213}

These present\textsuperscript{214} wars against the Ottomites.

Most humbly, therefore, bending to your state,\textsuperscript{215} I crave\textsuperscript{216} fit disposition\textsuperscript{217} for my wife;

\textsuperscript{198} deputy (Montano)
\textsuperscript{199} allowed sufficiency = satisfactory competence
\textsuperscript{200} judgment, belief
\textsuperscript{201} authoritative, governing, supreme
\textsuperscript{202} results
\textsuperscript{203} judgment, vote
\textsuperscript{204} slubber the gloss = stain/smear the glow/luster
\textsuperscript{205} stubborn and boisterous = difficult/intractable and unyielding/truculent
\textsuperscript{206} warlike enterprise
\textsuperscript{207} flinty and steel couch = rugged and hard bed
\textsuperscript{208} thrice-driven = feathers that have been three times dried with a fan, and thus made soft enough to lie on
\textsuperscript{209} confess
\textsuperscript{210} instinctive, inherent, innate
\textsuperscript{211} prompt alacrity = ready willingness
\textsuperscript{212} rigor, difficulty
\textsuperscript{213} take on, agree to carry on
\textsuperscript{214} current (“aforesaid”)
\textsuperscript{215} bending to your state = bowing to your (the Duke’s) lofty status/rank/position
\textsuperscript{216} ask, request
\textsuperscript{217} arrangements, living conditions
Due reference of place and exhibition,\textsuperscript{218} With such accommodation and besort\textsuperscript{219} As levels\textsuperscript{220} with her breeding.

\textit{Duke} Why, at her father’s?

\textit{Brabantio} I will not have it so.

\textit{Othello} Nor I.

\textit{Desdemona} Nor would I there reside,
To put my father in impatient\textsuperscript{221} thoughts
By being in his eye. Most gracious Duke,
To my unfolding\textsuperscript{222} lend your prosperous\textsuperscript{223} ear,
And let me find a charter\textsuperscript{224} in your voice
T’assist my simpleness.\textsuperscript{225}

\textit{Duke} What would you, Desdemona?

\textit{Desdemona} That I love the Moor to live\textsuperscript{226} with him,
My downright violence\textsuperscript{227} and storm of fortunes\textsuperscript{228}
May trumpet to the world. My heart’s subdued\textsuperscript{229}
Even to the very quality\textsuperscript{230} of my lord.
I saw Othello’s visage in his mind,\textsuperscript{231}

\textsuperscript{218} reference of place and exhibition = assignment of residence and maintenance/support/allowance
\textsuperscript{219} accommodation and besort = lodgings and suitable company/attendance
\textsuperscript{220} is equal/matches
\textsuperscript{221} uncomfortable, irritable
\textsuperscript{222} statement, explanation?
\textsuperscript{223} favorable
\textsuperscript{224} grant of privilege
\textsuperscript{225} innocence, guilelessness
\textsuperscript{226} to live = to the point/with the desire/purpose of living
\textsuperscript{227} downright violence = out and out/positively/thoroughly vehement/intense/passionate conduct
\textsuperscript{228} storm of fortunes = disturbance/tumult of events
\textsuperscript{229} conquered, overcome, overpowered
\textsuperscript{230} profession, business
\textsuperscript{231} in his mind = as he sees himself (a backhanded reference to Othello’s blackness, which he himself is not required to see, and does not see?)
And to his honors and his valiant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
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.

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
In me defunct—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.

act 1 • scene 3

232 strong, brave, bold
233 dedicate, devote
234 moth of peace = fluttering insignificant/calm creature (?)
235 practices (it has been suggested that Shakespeare meant “rights”; the words were virtual homonyms)
236 for which = because of which
237 taken from
238 gloomy, dark*
239 shall support = must endure
240 because of
241 therefore beg it not = do not ask it in order
242 liking, pleasure
243 desire, cravings
244 comply with heat = fulfill/satisfy passion/sexual excitement
245 desires, feelings
246 are extinct/dead
247 personal
248 free and bounteous = honorable/open-minded and generous
249 judgment, intention, wishes
250 if
251 diminish, neglect
For she is with me. No, when light-winged toys of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness 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 Make head against my estimation.

_Duke_ Be it as you shall privately determine, Either for her stay or going. The affair cries haste, And speed must answer it.

_Senator_ You must away tonight.

_Othello_ With all my heart.

_Duke_ At nine i’the morning, here we’ll meet again. Othello, leave some officer behind,

252 because
253 light-winged toys = evanescent/vaporous amorous entertainment/trifes
254 winged
255 blind, hoodwink (as a hawk with eyes stitched closed, for falconry/hunting training)
256 wanton dullness = undisciplined/self-indulgent sluggishness/stupidity
257 speculative and officed instruments = investigative/visual and (other) specially functioning organs
258 that my disports corrupt and taint my business = so that my pastimes pervert and tarnish/injure
259 out of, from
260 helmet
261 indign and base adversities = disgraceful/unworthy and despicable/low misfortunes/afflictions
262 make head = rise up, advance
263 reputation (ESiMAYseeON)
264 let it be
265 you both
266 affair cries = business/matter calls/cries out/demands
267 undertake, be responsible for
268 we = Duke and Senators
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.
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,
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

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.

exeunt Duke, Senators, Officers

Othello

My life upon her faith. Honest Iago,
My Desdemona must I leave to thee
I pray thee, let thy wife attend on her,

269 document certifying appointment and containing orders, instructions, etc.
270 things else = other things
271 quality and respect = rank/title and deference/courtesies
272 involve, relate to
273 honor, respectability, decency*
274 escorting
275 designate, consign
276 delighted beauty = delightful beauty (applicable to men as well as women)
277 worthy, excellent*
278 treat*
279 look to her = keep watch on/beware of her
280 pray thee
281 accompany, watch over, serve
And bring them 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.  

**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.

*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 have we a prescription to die when death is our physician.

*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 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.

---

282 in the best advantage = at the most favorable opportunity (as soon as possible)
283 guidance, instruction
284 submit to, comply with, act according to
285 age, era
286 heart = familiar term of endearment (surely ironic)
287 straightway, at once
288 explicit instruction/order
289 what bad manners, how shameful/atrocious/horrible
290 before
291 whore
292 exchange
Roderigo  What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond,293 but it is not in my virtue294 to amend it.

Iago  Virtue? A fig!295  'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners. So that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop296 and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender297 of herbs or distract298 it with many, either to have it sterile with299 idleness or manured with industry,300 why, the power and corrigible authority301 of this lies in our wills. If the balance302 of our lives had not one scale303 of reason to poise304 another305 of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason306 to cool our raging motions,307 our carnal stings,308 our unbitted309 lusts, whereof I take this, that you call love, to be a sect or scion.310

Roderigo  It cannot be.

293 infatuated, foolish, silly*
294 power
295 a fig = fiddlesticks, nonsense (contemptuous, and accompanied – as in Romeo and Juliet – by gestures very like today’s “giving the finger”)
296 set hyssop = set out/plant small bushy aromatic herb (HISSup)
297 kind
298 distract = confuse, spoil, disorder
299 either to have it sterile with = either have it unproductive/barren from
300 manured with industry = cultivated/tilled diligently
301 corrigible authority = correctable power/right
302 (1) scale (in modern usage), (2) metaphorical balance
303 one pan of the two pans employed in a balance scale
304 balance, steady
305 another scale
306 rationality, logic, thought
307 emotions
308 irritations, pains
309 unrestrained
310 sect or scion = class or shoot/twig/descendant
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 the wars, defeat thy favor 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 shall be to him shortly as acerb as the coloquintida. She must change for youth. When she is

311 license, liberty
312 declared
313 knot to thy deserving = tied/knotted to your merit
314 heavy ropes
315 permanent, everlasting
316 assist, be of use/profit to
317 put money in thy purse = get cash (“make yourself liquid”)
318 go forward with, accompany
319 nullify
320 face, appearance
321 borrowed, false
322 answerable sequestration = responsive/proper/suitable separation/disjunction
323 put but = just put
324 desires
325 sweet fruit of the carob tree
326 sour, bitter
327 a bitter fruit (koLAkwINTEda)
328 exchange him
sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice. She must have change, she must. 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 supersubtle 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

329 understand, discover
330 a substitution
331 necessarily
332 damn thyself: suicide was considered a grave sin
333 delightful, pleasant
334 hypocritical holiness
335 wandering, roaming
336 over-subtle
337 difficult
338 and also for
339 (?) tribe = population; Iago pretty clearly is referring to demons, etc.; but why? Is this a remark to himself or to Roderigo?
340 possess, have sexual intercourse with
341 on
342 completely
343 out of the way = off the proper path, out of the question, mistaken (“not done”)
344 encompassing, achieving, devising
345 firm, unshaken, steadfast
346 rely, count on
347 outcome, result
often, and I re-tell 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. I’ll go sell all my land.

Roderigo 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,

348 fixed/established in the heart
349 united
350 amusement, recreation, entertainment*
351 determined, resolved
352 move along, act
353 at an early hour
354 go to = go on (“oh yeah”)*
355 always
356 acquired
357 violate, desecrate
358 consume
359 marsh bird (a common insult)
360 except
And it is thought abroad\textsuperscript{361} that ’twixt my sheets
He has done my office.\textsuperscript{362} I know not if’t be true,
But I, for mere\textsuperscript{363} suspicion in that kind,\textsuperscript{364}
Will do\textsuperscript{365} as if for surety.\textsuperscript{366} He holds me well,\textsuperscript{367}
The better shall my purpose work on him.

Cassio’s a proper\textsuperscript{368} man. Let me see now;
To get his place, and to plume up\textsuperscript{369} my will\textsuperscript{370}
In double knavery – How? How? Let’s see.
After some time, to abuse Othello’s ear
That he\textsuperscript{371} is too familiar with his\textsuperscript{372} wife.
He\textsuperscript{373} hath a person,\textsuperscript{374} and a smooth dispose,\textsuperscript{375}
To be suspected, framed\textsuperscript{376} to make women false.\textsuperscript{377}
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly\textsuperscript{378} be led by the nose
As asses are.

\textsuperscript{361} widely
\textsuperscript{362} function (as a husband)
\textsuperscript{363} pure, sheer, downright*
\textsuperscript{364} in that kind = of that sort
\textsuperscript{365} act
\textsuperscript{366} certain
\textsuperscript{367} holds me well = thinks well of/estems me
\textsuperscript{368} (1) respectable, (2) handsome*
\textsuperscript{369} adorn (with metaphorical feathers)
\textsuperscript{370} desire, inclination
\textsuperscript{371} Cassio
\textsuperscript{372} Othello’s
\textsuperscript{373} Cassio
\textsuperscript{374} semblance, appearance
\textsuperscript{375} smooth dispose = pleasant/affable/plausible external manner/air
\textsuperscript{376} fashioned/made*
\textsuperscript{377} unfaithful, deceptive, deceiving
\textsuperscript{378} gently, softly
I have’t. It is engendered. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light.

EXIT

379 begotten, generated
Act 2

Scene 1
Cyprus

Enter Montano and two Gentlemen

Montano  What from the cape² can you discern at sea?

Gentleman 1  Nothing at all. It is a high-wrought flood.³

I cannot, ’twixt the heaven and the main,⁴
Descry⁵ a sail.

Montano  Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at⁶ land,
          A fuller⁷ blast ne’er shook our battlements.⁸

¹ (editorial conjectures have Gentleman 1 placed (1) above, (2) to the side, or (3) to the back. But not only do Montano’s first words make it uncertain whether Gentleman 1 is at the moment seeing or reporting what he has previously seen, but in line 36 Montano suggests that they now go “to the seaside.”)
² projecting headland/promontory
³ high-wrought flood = (1) very agitated sea, (2) sea casting up very high waves
⁴ mainland
⁵ get sight of, perceive, detect
⁶ spoke aloud at = sounded/reverberated loudly on
⁷ stronger, larger
⁸ fortifications built on top of defensive walls
If it hath ruffianed so⁹ upon the sea,
What ribs of oak,¹⁰ when mountains melt¹¹ on them,
Can hold the mortise?¹² What shall we hear of this?

_Gentleman 2_ A segregation¹³ of the Turkish fleet.

For, do but¹⁴ stand upon the foaming¹⁵ shore,
The chidden billow¹⁶ seems to pelt¹⁷ the clouds,
The wind-shaked surge,¹⁸ with high and monstrous main,¹⁹
Seems to cast water on the burning Bear,²⁰
And quench the guards²¹ of th’ever-fixèd pole.
I never did like molestation view²²
On the enchafèd²³ flood.

_Montano_ If that²⁴ the Turkish fleet
Be not ensheltered and embayed,²⁵ they are drowned.
It is impossible to bear it out.²⁶

---

⁹ ruffianed so = blustered/raged so violently
¹⁰ ribs of oak = curved oaken frame timbers of a ship’s hull
¹¹ mountains melt = mountainlike waves of water break (as clouds melt into
 rain)
¹² mortise = joined beams
¹³ a segregation = what we shall hear is a breakup/dispersion
¹⁴ do but = because, just
¹⁵ foaming = covered with foam (modern usage: “foamy”)
¹⁶ chidden billow = blast-driven swelling waves
¹⁷ pelt = strike
¹⁸ waves, water
¹⁹ power, force
²⁰ star constellation Ursa Minor (“Little Bear”); starlight as metaphorical “fire”
²¹ guards = stars, though just which stars is unclear
²² like molestation view [adjective, noun, verb] = such troubled/agitated waves
to see (“seeing such agitated waves”)
²³ enthafèd = furious
²⁴ if that = if it turns out that
²⁵ ensheltered and embayed = protected/screened and enclosed in a bay or other recess
²⁶ bear it out = sustain/endure
enter Gentleman 3

20 Gentleman 3 News, lads. Our wars are done. 
   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. 

25 Montano How! Is this true?

25 Gentleman 3 The ship is here put in, a Veronessa. 
   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.

30 Montano I am glad on't. ’Tis a worthy governor. 

35 Gentleman 3 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.

27 spirited men*
28 extreme, hopelessly bad/awful, highly dangerous 
29 violently beaten, knocked about 
30 undertaking, enterprise 
31 large 
32 wrack and sufferance = disaster/destruction/ruin and damage 
33 the largest/greatest 
34 (exclamation) 
35 a vessel from Verona 
36 has 
37 at sea = is at sea 
38 is in full commission here = will be here in complete command/authority 
39 of it 
40 it/he is 
41 of comfort = comfortingly 
42 about 
43 grave, sober
Montano

Pray heavens he be.

For I have served him, and the man commands
Like a full solid 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 the aerial blue
An indistinct regard.

Gentleman 3

Come, let’s do so.

For every minute is expectancy
Of more arrivancy.

Enter Cassio

Cassio

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

Montano

Is he well shipped?

Cassio

His bark is stoutly timbered, and his pilot

44 solid, satisfying, complete
45 throw out = look outward (to sea)
46 as to throw out our eyes for brave Othello (n.b. as scanned, for prosodic purposes, but not as spoken)
47 as far as (ee’n TILL)
48 reach the point, produce / create a visual prospect in which
49 indistinct regard = indistinguishable view / prospect / sight
50 at any
51 is expectancy = there is the expectation
52 arrival
53 thanks you the valiant of this warlike isle
54 commend
55 been separated from
56 comparatively small ship
57 stoutly timbered = strongly / solidly* constructed
58 helmsman, steersman, guide
Of very expert and approved allowance,\textsuperscript{59}
Therefore my hopes, not surfeited to death,\textsuperscript{60}
Stand in bold cure.\textsuperscript{61}

\emph{Voices within} A sail, a sail, a sail!

\textbf{enter Gentleman 4}

\textbf{Cassio} What noise?\textsuperscript{62}
\textbf{Gentleman 4} The town is empty.\textsuperscript{63} On the brow o’\textsuperscript{64} the sea
Stand ranks\textsuperscript{65} of people, and they cry, “A sail!”

\textbf{Cassio} My hopes do shape him\textsuperscript{66} for the governor.\textsuperscript{67}

\textbf{Cannon within}

\textbf{Gentleman 2} They\textsuperscript{68} do discharge their shot of courtesy.\textsuperscript{69}
Our friends at least.\textsuperscript{70}

\textbf{Cassio} I pray you, sir, go forth,
And give us truth who ’tis that is arrived.

\textbf{Gentleman 2} I shall.

\textsuperscript{59} expert and approved allowance = experienced/skillful and proven/tested/esteemed reputation
\textsuperscript{60} not surfeited to death = so long as they are not pushed too hard (“fed to the point of killing them”)
\textsuperscript{61} stand in bold cure = remain in fearless anxiety (“confident but concerned”)
\textsuperscript{62} what is that loud outcry/clamor/shouting
\textsuperscript{63} vacated
\textsuperscript{64} brow o’ = hill/clip overlooking
\textsuperscript{65} rows/lines
\textsuperscript{66} shape him = picture it (the approaching ship)
\textsuperscript{67} Othello
\textsuperscript{68} (1) Cyprus cannon, in welcome, or more probably (2) the arriving ship, as a signal of peaceful intent
\textsuperscript{69} shot of courtesy: cannon (often a specified number) were fired as a welcoming salute
\textsuperscript{70} (not that is the Turks, or any other enemy)
exit Gentleman 2

Montano But good lieutenant, is your general wived?71

Cassio Most fortunately. He hath achieved72 a maid
That paragons73 description and wild fame,74
One that excels75 the quirks of blazoning76 pens,
And in th’essential vesture of creation77
Does tire the ingeniver.78

enter Gentleman 2

How now? Who has put in?

Gentleman 2 ’Tis one Iago, ancient to the general.

Cassio Ha’s79 had most favorable and happy speed.80
Tempests themselves,81 high seas, and howling winds,
The guttered82 rocks, and congregated83 sands,
Traitors ensteeped84 to clog85 the guiltless keel,86

71 married
72 won
73 surpasses
74 wild fame = uncontrolled/extravagant public report/celebrity
75 is superior to, outdoes
76 quirks of blazoning = quibbles/tricks of portraying/descriptive
77 essential vesture of creation = inherent/intrinsic garb/raiment/clothing of
the imagination/wit/intelligence
78 tire the ingeniver = exhausts/wearies/fatigues the contriver (verbal
“engineer”: Cassio himself)
79 ha’s = he has
80 favorable and happy speed = agreeable/pleasing and lucky (1) good fortune,
or (2) rapidity
81 tempests themselves = even tempests
82 grooved, worn away
83 clustered, massed
84 stationed underwater
85 obstruct, hamper
86 ship’s bottom
As having sense\(^{87}\) of beauty, do omit\(^{88}\)  
Their mortal\(^{89}\) natures, letting go safely by  
The divine Desdemona.\(^{90}\)

**Montano**  What is she?\(^{91}\)

**Cassio**  She that I spake of, our great captain’s captain,\(^{92}\)

75 Left in the conduct of the bold Iago,  
Whose footing\(^{93}\) here anticipates our thoughts  
A se’night’s\(^{94}\) speed. Great Jove, Othello guard,\(^{95}\)  
And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath,  
That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,

80 Make love’s quick pants\(^{96}\) in Desdemona’s arms,  
Give renewed\(^{97}\) fire to our extincted\(^{98}\) spirits,  
And bring all Cyprus comfort!\(^{99}\)

**enter Desdemona, Emilia, Iago, Roderigo, and Attendants**

O, behold,  
The riches of the ship is come on shore.  
Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.

\(^{87}\) as having sense = as if they (tempests, etc.) had a perception  
\(^{88}\) neglect, fail to use  
\(^{89}\) deadly, fatal  
\(^{90}\) prosody requires either DIvine or desDEYmoNA; the latter is much more likely: Renaissance English shifted accents more often and more readily than does 21st-c. English  
\(^{91}\) Montano has not yet heard her name  
\(^{92}\) leader (highly rhetorical, as is Cassio himself)  
\(^{93}\) setting foot on land  
\(^{94}\) se’nights = seven night’s (“a week”)  
\(^{95}\) Othello guard = guard Othello  
\(^{96}\) love’s quick pants = the short, rapid breathing of lovemaking  
\(^{97}\) REnewed  
\(^{98}\) extinguished  
\(^{99}\) (a half-line from the Quarto, not in the Folio)
Cassio and the others kneel

Hall 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. But, hark! A sail.

Voices within A sail, a sail!

sound of cannons within

Gentleman 2 They give their greeting to the citadel.

This likewise is a friend.

Cassio (to Gentleman 2) See for the news.

exit Gentleman 2

(to Iago) 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 show of courtesy.

Cassio kisses Emilia

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

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.

Emilia  You have little cause to say so.

Iago  Come on, come on. You are pictures out of doors,
      Bells in your parlors, wild cats in your kitchens,

110 stretch out, widen, enlarge
111 polite behavior
112 parentage, rearing, training
113 grants, bestows on
114 audacious, presumptuous
115 if she would
116 as
117 confers*
118 has no speech = can’t/won’t reply
119 desire, wish
120 sets, places
121 scolds, complains*
122 reason, motive*
123 come on: an expression of challenge/defiance
124 you women (“you’re”)
125 images/symbols (unreal representations)
126 (?) chattering noisemakers
127 private/domestic rooms
128 wild cats = savage, ill-tempered
Saints in your injuries,\textsuperscript{129} devils being offended,\textsuperscript{129}
Players\textsuperscript{130} in your housewifery, and housewives\textsuperscript{131} in your beds.

\textit{Desdemona} O, fie upon thee,\textsuperscript{132} slanderer!
\textit{Iago} Nay, it is true, or else\textsuperscript{133} I am a Turk.\textsuperscript{134}
You rise to play,\textsuperscript{135} and go to bed to work.
\textit{Emilia} You shall not write my praise.
\textit{Iago} No, let me not.
\textit{Desdemona} What wouldst thou write of me, if thou shouldst praise me?
\textit{Iago} O gentle lady, do not put\textsuperscript{136} me to’t,
For I am nothing if not critical.\textsuperscript{137}
\textit{Desdemona} Come on, assay.\textsuperscript{138} – There’s one\textsuperscript{139} gone to the harbor?
\textit{Iago} Ay, madam.
\textit{Desdemona} (aside) I am not merry,\textsuperscript{140} but I do beguile\textsuperscript{141}
The thing I am, by seeming otherwise.
(to \textit{Iago}) Come, how wouldst thou praise me?
\textit{Iago} I am about it,\textsuperscript{142} but indeed my invention\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{129} in your injuries = when you are insulted/offended/injured
\textsuperscript{130} actors
\textsuperscript{131} hussies (women of low/improper behavior)
\textsuperscript{132} fie upon thee = for shame
\textsuperscript{133} otherwise
\textsuperscript{134} (1) cruel/tyrannical barbarian, (2) bad-tempered/unmanageable man
\textsuperscript{135} perform, frolic/fool about
\textsuperscript{136} urge, push, propose, suggest*
\textsuperscript{137} censorious, fault-finding
\textsuperscript{138} try
\textsuperscript{139} someone
\textsuperscript{140} cheerful
\textsuperscript{141} divert attention from
\textsuperscript{142} about it = busying myself/trying
\textsuperscript{143} inventiveness, powers of mental creation, imagination*
Comes from my pate\textsuperscript{144} as birdlime\textsuperscript{145} does from frize,\textsuperscript{146}
It plucks out brains and all. But my Muse labors,\textsuperscript{147}
And thus she is delivered:
“If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,
The one’s for use,\textsuperscript{148} the other\textsuperscript{149} useth it.”

\textit{Desdemona} Well praised. How if she be black\textsuperscript{150} and witty?
\textit{Iago} “If she be black, and thereto have a wit,
She’ll find a white\textsuperscript{151} that shall her blackness fit.”

\textit{Desdemona} Worse and worse.
\textit{Emilia} How\textsuperscript{152} if fair and foolish?
\textit{Iago} “She never yet was foolish that was fair,
For even her folly helped her to\textsuperscript{153} an heir.”

\textit{Desdemona} These are old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh i’
the alehouse.\textsuperscript{154} What miserable praise hast thou for her that’s
foul and foolish?
\textit{Iago} ”There’s none so foul and foolish thereunto,

\textit{Desdemona} O heavy ignorance. Thou praisest the worst best. But
what praise couldst thou bestow on\textsuperscript{156} a deserving woman

\textsuperscript{144} head
\textsuperscript{145} birdlime = sticky plant-derived substance, spread on twigs/branches to
snare birds
\textsuperscript{146} does from frize = comes/can be taken off coarse woolen cloth
\textsuperscript{147} is in labor/childbirth (the nine Muses were female)
\textsuperscript{148} wit, intelligence
\textsuperscript{149} beauty
\textsuperscript{150} foul, unattractive (foul: the opposite of fair)
\textsuperscript{151} a pun on “wight,” meaning “person”?
\textsuperscript{152} what
\textsuperscript{153} to capture/marry a man who will inherit a fortune
\textsuperscript{154} pub (“bar,” “saloon”)
\textsuperscript{155} infamous/wicked tricks
\textsuperscript{156} bestow on = apply to
indeed? One 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,
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.
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 — ”

Desdemona To do what?

Iago To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.

Desdemona O most lame and impotent conclusion! Do not

157 a deserving woman indeed = a woman indeed deserving
158 power
159 justly put on = correctly/rightfully/with good reason urge/encourage/entrust herself
160 vouch of very malice = declarations/statements of true/wickedness*
161 too free in her conduct
162 (noun)
163 remain as it was
164 fly off/away
165 weak, easily overcome
166 cod’s head for the salmon’s tail = the ugly, edible part of a common fish for the beautiful, inedible part of an expensive fish
167 wooers
168 back
169 creature
170 babies were often referred to as “fools”
171 chronicle small beer = keep track/a record of trifles/trivial matters (i.e., be in charge of household affairs)
172 lame and impotent = unsatisfactory/defective and ineffectual/powerless/decrepit
learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy husband. How say you, Cassio? Is he not a most profane and liberal counselor?

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. You say true, ’tis so, indeed. If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenancy, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the 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!

TRUMPET WITHIN

(to the others) 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
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 laboring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
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
But that our loves and comforts should increase
Even as our days do grow.

186 go to meet
187 greet, welcome
188 there
189 stirred into action, aroused
190 laboring bark = pitching/rolling/struggling ship
191 Olympus-high = as high as Mt. Olympus, at the summit of which lived the Greek gods
192 plunge
193 hell is
194 if it were now = if this was the time
195 perfect, consummate
196 follows, comes after
197 but that = anything but/except that
ACT 2 • SCENE 1

Othello

Amen to that, sweet powers.\textsuperscript{198} I cannot speak enough of this content, It stops\textsuperscript{199} me here.\textsuperscript{200} It is too much of joy. And this,\textsuperscript{201} and this,\textsuperscript{202} the greatest discords be

HE KISSES HER

That e’er our hearts shall make.

Iago \textit{(aside)} O, you are well tuned\textsuperscript{203} now!

But I’ll set down\textsuperscript{204} the pegs\textsuperscript{205} that make this music, As honest as I am.

Othello Come, let us to the castle.\textsuperscript{206}

\textit{(greeting Cypriots)} News, friends, our wars are done, the Turks are drowned. How does my old acquaintance\textsuperscript{207} of this isle?

\textit{(to Desdemona)} Honey, you shall be well desired\textsuperscript{208} in Cyprus, I have found great love amongst them, O my sweet, I prattle out of fashion,\textsuperscript{209} and I dote In\textsuperscript{210} mine own comforts. I prithee, good Iago,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{198} the “heavens”
\item \textsuperscript{199} closes, plugs up
\item \textsuperscript{200} his heart
\item \textsuperscript{201} may this
\item \textsuperscript{202} (1) two separate references, one to his heart, one as he reaches down to kiss her, or (2) repetition as emphasis, and both references being to kissing
\item \textsuperscript{203} well tuned = you’re singing the right song, you’ve got the correct melody
\item \textsuperscript{204} slacken
\item \textsuperscript{205} tuning pins (on which the strings of a musical instrument are wound)
\item \textsuperscript{206} come LETS to the CASTle
\item \textsuperscript{207} does my old acquaintance = are my old friends/acquaintances
\item \textsuperscript{208} well desired = in demand, popular
\item \textsuperscript{209} out of fashion = impolitely, contrary to customary standards/rules
\item \textsuperscript{210} dote in = am infatuated by
\end{itemize}
Go to the bay and disembark my coffers.  
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 Othello, Desdemona, and Attendants_

_Iago_ (to Roderigo) Do thou meet me presently at the harbor.  
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.

_Roderigo_ With him? Why, ’tis not possible.

_Iago_ Lay thy finger thus (_across his lips_), 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? Let not thy discreet  
heart think it. Her eye must be fed. And what delight shall  
she have to look on the devil? When the blood is made
dull with the act of sport, there should be a game to inflame it and to give satiety a fresh appetite. Loveliness in favor, sympathy in years, manners, and beauties, all which the Moor is defective in. Now, for want of these required conveniences, 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? A knave very voluble, no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compass 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 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.

Roderigo I cannot believe that in her, she is full of most blessed condition.

Iago Blest fig’s end. The wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed pudding. Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? Didst not mark that?

Roderigo Yes, that I did. But that was but courtesy.

Iago 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

---

241 slipper and subtle = slippery and elusive/clever/crafty/sly
242 opportunities
243 can stamp = which can fabricate
244 opportunities
245 unripe, immature
246 look after = pursue
247 state of being
248 see act 1, scene 3, note 295
249 (1) pudding, (2) animal guts/intestines
250 play fondly
251 by this hand: an oath (compare “by my foot,” “by my head,” “by my nose,” etc.)
252 table of contents
253 dark, elusive
254 narrative, tale, story
255 close
256 wicked, depraved
mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, th’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 favorably minister.

Roderigo Well.

Iago Sir, he is rash, and very sudden in choler, and haply 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

intimacies
arrange, guide, point out
hard at hand = close behind
governing
practice, exertion
united in one body
guided, governed
as for
commend [noun] = telling you what you’re to do
lay’t upon = give it to
insulting
military skill
supply
anger, irascibility
perhaps, maybe
character, nature
must thereafter
liking
supplanting, replacing
prefer them. And the impediment most profitably removed, without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity.

Roderigo I will do this, if I can bring it to any opportunity.

Iago I warrant thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel. I must fetch his necessaries ashore. Farewell.

Roderigo Adieu.

exit Roderigo

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, 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 perchance I stand accountant for as great a sin – But partly led to diet my revenge,

276 advance, promote
277 advantageously, beneficially
278 success
279 lead, conduct
280 timeliness, seasonableness
281 guarantee, promise
282 immediately, at once*
283 Othello’s
284 appropriate
285 howbeit that = although
286 endure him not = cannot stand him
287 worthy, loving (is there a pun on “dear” as “costly”?)
288 perchance, perhaps
289 responsible
290 (the revenge he immediately proceeds to speak of?)
291 feed
For that I do suspect the lusty²⁹² Moor
Hath leaped into my seat.²⁹³ The thought whereof
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards,²⁹⁴
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am evened with him, wife for wife,
Or, failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment²⁹⁵ cannot cure.²⁹⁶ Which thing to do,
If this poor trash²⁹⁷ of Venice, whom I trace²⁹⁸
For his quick hunting,²⁹⁹ stand³⁰⁰ the putting on,³⁰¹
I’ll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,³⁰²
Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb³⁰³
(For I fear Cassio with³⁰⁴ my night-cap³⁰⁵ too),
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me
For making him egregiously³⁰⁶ an ass
And practicing³⁰⁷ upon his peace and quiet

²⁹² lustful, libidinous
²⁹³ place (as a husband)
²⁹⁴ guts (“insides”)
²⁹⁵ discernment, critical thinking, reason
²⁹⁶ cure it
²⁹⁷ worthless/disreputable person
²⁹⁸ pursue
²⁹⁹ for his quick hunting = in order to rapidly catch/fleece him
³⁰⁰ will/can endure
³⁰¹ putting on = driving, incitement
³⁰² on the hip = at a disadvantage (as in wrestling)
³⁰³ rank garb = lustful/licentious* style/manner/fashion
³⁰⁴ might be wearing
³⁰⁵ men and women slept with their heads covered, for warmth
³⁰⁶ remarkably, grossly
³⁰⁷ plotting, scheming, conspiring
Even to madness. ’Tis here, but yet confused. Knavery’s plain face is never seen till used.

EXIT

308 the idea/plan is
309 not as yet in order/fully clear
310 open, direct, bare
311 employed
enter a Herald with proclamation, people following

Herald  It is Othello’s pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that upon certain¹ tidings now arrived, importing² the mere perdition³ of the Turkish fleet, every man put⁴ himself into triumph,⁵ some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what⁶ sport and revels⁷ his addiction⁸ leads him. For besides these beneficial⁹ news, it¹⁰ is the celebration of his nuptial. So much¹¹ was¹² his pleasure should be proclaimed. All offices¹³ are open, and there is full liberty¹⁴ 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!

EXEUNT

¹ reliable, precise
² signifying, meaning*
³ destruction, ruin*
⁴ is to put
⁵ joyful celebration, public festivity
⁶ whatever
⁷ noisy mirth/merry making
⁸ inclination, leaning
⁹ advantageous
¹⁰ this
¹¹ so much = thus
¹² was it
¹³ kitchens, stores of food
¹⁴ unhindered authorization/opportunity/permission (“license”)
ACT 2 • SCENE 3

SCENE 3

The Citadel, Cyprus

Enter Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, and Attendants

Othello Good Michael, look you to the guard tonight. Let’s teach ourselves that honorable stop,¹ Not to outsport discretion.²

Cassio Iago hath direction³ what to do. But notwithstanding, with my personal⁴ eye Will I look to’t.

Othello Iago is most honest. Michael, good night. Tomorrow with your earliest,⁵ Let me have speech with you. (to Desdemona) Come, my dear love. The purchase⁶ made, the fruits⁷ are to ensue: That profit’s⁸ yet to come ’tween me and you. (to Cassio) Goodnight.

Exeunt Othello, Desdemona, and Attendants

Enter Iago

Cassio Welcome, Iago. We must to the watch.⁹

¹ check, restraint, holding back
² outsport discretion = indulge/amuse ourselves beyond reasonable/rational limits
³ instructions/guidance*
⁴ own
⁵ with your earliest = as early as you can make it
⁶ acquisition, capture, bargain
⁷ revenue, consequences, enjoyment
⁸ profit’s = benefit/gain is
⁹ guard duty
Iago  Not this hour,\textsuperscript{10} lieutenant, 'tis not yet ten o’ th’ clock. Our general cast\textsuperscript{11} us thus early for the love of his Desdemona, who let us not therefore blame. He hath not yet made wanton\textsuperscript{12} the night with her. And she is sport for Jove.

Cassio  She’s a most exquisite\textsuperscript{13} lady.

Iago  And, I’ll warrant her, full of game.

Cassio  Indeed, she is a most fresh\textsuperscript{14} and delicate creature.

Iago  What an eye\textsuperscript{15} she has! Methinks it sounds a parley to\textsuperscript{16} provocation.\textsuperscript{17}

Cassio  An inviting\textsuperscript{18} eye. And yet methinks right modest.\textsuperscript{19}

Iago  And when she speaks, is it not an alarm\textsuperscript{20} to love?

Cassio  She is, indeed, perfection.

Iago  Well. Happiness to their sheets.\textsuperscript{21} Come, lieutenant, I have a stoup\textsuperscript{22} of wine, and here without\textsuperscript{23} are a brace\textsuperscript{24} of Cyprus gallants\textsuperscript{25} that would fain\textsuperscript{26} have a measure\textsuperscript{27} to the health of black Othello.

\textsuperscript{10} not this hour = not yet
\textsuperscript{11} shed, sent, got rid of
\textsuperscript{12} amorously sexual*
\textsuperscript{13} excellent, beautiful
\textsuperscript{14} invigorating, untainted, not faded/worn*
\textsuperscript{15} an eye = a look
\textsuperscript{16} sounds a parley to = gives a call/summons to a conference/discussion leading to
\textsuperscript{17} incitement, stimulus
\textsuperscript{18} alluring, tempting, attractive
\textsuperscript{19} right modest = altogether/completely decorous, proper
\textsuperscript{20} call to arms, signal
\textsuperscript{21} sexual activity in bed
\textsuperscript{22} jar (alcohol was not bottled)
\textsuperscript{23} outside*
\textsuperscript{24} pair
\textsuperscript{25} Cyprus gallants = local fashionable/polished gentlemen
\textsuperscript{26} be pleased/glad to*
\textsuperscript{27} tankard (“quantity,”“some”)
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.

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.

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 Cassio

Iago If I can fasten but one cup upon him, With that which he hath drunk tonight already He’ll be as full of quarrel and offense As my young mistress’ dog. Now, my sick fool Roderigo, Whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out,

28 poor and unhappy = deficient/feeble and unfortunate/miserable/wretched
29 polite cultivated society
30 these Cypriots? all Cypriots?
31 skillfully/cleverly restricted/restrained/measured out
32 alteration, change
33 in me
34 limitation, weakness
35 strain, stress
36 it dislikes me = it displeases/annoys/offends me
37 fasten . . . upon him = induce him to accept
38 Desdemona (wife of his master)
39 deeply affected by longing (“lovesick”)
To Desdemona hath tonight caroused
Potations pottle-deep, and he’s to watch.
Three lads of Cyprus, noble swelling spirits,
That hold their honors in a wary distance,
The very elements of this warlike isle,
Have I tonight flustered with flowing cups,
And they watch too. Now, ’mongst this flock of drunkards,
Am I to put our Cassio in some action
That may offend the isle.

enter Cassio, with Montano and Gentlemen

But here they come.

If consequence do but approve my dream,
My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

Cassio ’Fore heaven, they have given me a rouse already.

40 in pledge/as toasts to
41 drunk freely/repeatedly, swilled
42 potations pottle-deep = drinks/draughts measuring two quarts (one pottle) down to the bottom
43 he’s to watch = he is assigned to guard duty
44 proud, haughty, pretentiously pompous
45 in a wary distance = at a careful/cautious fixed interval (“aloofness”)
46 basic substances
47 made half-tipsy
48 are on guard duty
49 band, company
50 am I to put = I am going/planning to push/propel/drive
51 in some action = into some deed
52 transgress/sin against, anger*
53 the results
54 approve my dream = confirm/make good my fancies/vision
55 by (“before”)
56 full draught/bumper
Montano  Good faith, a little one. Not past a pint, as I am a soldier.

Iago  Some wine, ho!

HE SINGS

And let me the cannakin clink, clink,
And let me the cannakin clink.
  A soldier’s a man,
  O, man’s life’s but a span,
  Why then let a soldier drink.

(calls to servants) 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.

57 more than
58 small can/drinking vessel
59 mighty
60 drinking
61 pendulous-paunched (“beer-bellied”)
62 excellent, cultivated
63 with facility = easily
64 sweats not to overthrow = does not work/labor to defeat/demolish/ruin
65 German
66 gives ... a vomit = makes ... vomit
To the health of our general!
I am for it, lieutenant. And I’ll do you justice.\textsuperscript{67}
O sweet England!

King Stephen was and-a\textsuperscript{68} worthy peer,\textsuperscript{69}
His breeches cost him but a crown,\textsuperscript{70}
He held them sixpence all too dear,\textsuperscript{71}
With that he called the tailor lown.\textsuperscript{72}
He\textsuperscript{73} was a wight of high renown,\textsuperscript{74}
And thou\textsuperscript{75} art but of low degree.\textsuperscript{76}
’Tis pride that pulls the country down,
Then take\textsuperscript{77} thine auld\textsuperscript{78} cloak about thee.

Some wine, ho!
Why, this is a more exquisite song than the other.
Will\textsuperscript{79} you hear it again?
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.
It’s true, good lieutenant.
Act 2 • Scene 3

Cassio

For mine own part, no offense 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. 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. I am not drunk now. I can stand well enough, and I speak well enough.

Gentlemen

Excellent well.

Cassio

Why, very well then. You must not think, then, that I am drunk.

Exit Cassio

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

And give direction. And do but see his vice.

’Tis to his virtue a just equinox, The one as long as the other. ’Tis pity of him.

I fear the trust Othello puts him in,

On some odd time of his infirmity Will shake this island.

80 level place for cannon
81 station (verb)
82 has
83 just equinox = equal balance (of the length of day and of night, as the sun crosses the equator)
84 concerning, about
85 singular, unusual
86 agitate (“destabilize”)
Montano

But is he often thus?

Iago 'Tis evermore his prologue to his sleep.

He'll watch the horologe a double set

If drink rock not his cradle.

Montano It were well

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?

enter Roderigo

Iago (aside) How now, Roderigo?

I pray you after the lieutenant, go.

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.

I do love Cassio well, and would do much

87 always
88 clock (HOAR.aLOWDGE)
89 a double set = two passages from 1 to 12, or 24 hours (i.e., be unable to fall asleep)
90 put in mind = made aware
91 values, esteems*
92 at
93 risk
94 fixed, attached
95 not even for
cry within, “help, help”

To cure him of this evil. But, hark, what noise?

enter Cassio, pursuing Roderigo

Cassio 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.
Roderigo Beat me?
Cassio Dost thou prate, rogue?

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 mazard.
Montano Come, come, you’re drunk.
Cassio Drunk?

they fight

Iago (aside to Rodrigo) Away, I say, go out and cry a mutiny.

exit Roderigo

Nay, good lieutenant – Alas, gentlemen –
Help, masters! Here’s a goodly watch indeed.

96 hear, listen*
97 wickerwork
98 head (“bowl, cup”)
99 shout, exclaim, proclaim
100 Cassio and Montano
101 splendid, admirable, proper
Who's that which rings the bell? Diablo, ho! The town will rise. Fie, fie, lieutenant, You'll be ashamed forever.

enter Othello and Attendants

Othello  What is the matter here?
Montano    Zounds, I bleed still,
           I am hurt to th' death. He dies!

Montano lunges at Cassio

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?
        Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that
        Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?
        For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.
        He that stirs next, to carve for his own rage,
        Holds his soul light. He dies upon his motion.
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,
In quarter, and in terms like bride and groom
Devesting them for bed. And then, but now —
As if some planet had unwitted men —
Swords out, and tilting one at other’s breasts
In opposition bloody. I cannot speak
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.

---

113 inspiring dread/fear
114 her propriety = its proper state/condition
115 benumbed, insensible
116 devotion, regard
117 friends all = everyone was friendly, all were good friends
118 but now = until now
119 precisely, exactly
120 in quarter = in this guard period
121 in terms = in (1) mutual relations, (2) words
122 undressing themselves
123 astronomical influence
124 deprived of their brains/wits
125 thrusting, striking
126 antagonism, hostility, combat
127 state
128 peevish odds = foolish/senseless/mad/ perverse strife/disturbance (a noun in the singular)
129 I wish, I had rather
130 action glorious = fighting which was full of glory
131 to a part of it = to be involved (“a party”) in it
132 lost yourself/sight of your duty/position
Othello  Worthy Montano, you were wont to be civil.\textsuperscript{133}

The gravity and stillness\textsuperscript{134} of your youth
The world hath noted, and your name is great
In mouths of wisest censure.\textsuperscript{135} What’s the matter
That you unlace\textsuperscript{136} your reputation thus,
And spend\textsuperscript{137} your rich opinion\textsuperscript{138} for the name

Montano  Worthy Othello, I am hurt to\textsuperscript{139} danger.
Your officer, Iago, can inform you –
While I spare speech, which something\textsuperscript{140} now offends\textsuperscript{141} me –
Of all that I do know, nor know I aught

By me that’s said or done amiss\textsuperscript{142} this night,
Unless self-charity\textsuperscript{143} be sometimes a vice,
And to defend ourselves it be a sin
When violence assails\textsuperscript{144} us.

Othello  Now, by heaven,
My blood begins my safer guides\textsuperscript{145} to rule,\textsuperscript{146}

And passion, having my best judgment collied,\textsuperscript{147}

\begin{itemize}
  \item wont to be civil = in the habit\textsuperscript{*} of being polite
  \item gravity and stillness = sobriety and calm/tranquillity
  \item opinion, judgment
  \item destroy, undo
  \item give away, exhaust, consume, destroy
  \item reputation
  \item almost to, to the point of
  \item to a degree (in British usage, “rather”)
  \item hurts, pains
  \item wrongly, out of order
  \item charity = love
  \item attacks, assaults
  \item safer guides = more cautious guidance/sense of direction/control
  \item control, dominate
  \item darkened
\end{itemize}
Assays to lead the way. If I once stir,\textsuperscript{148}
Or do but lift this arm, the best\textsuperscript{149} of you
Shall sink\textsuperscript{150} in my rebuke.\textsuperscript{151} Give me to know
How this foul rout\textsuperscript{152} began. Who set it on,\textsuperscript{153}
And he that is approved\textsuperscript{154} in this offense,
Though he had twinned\textsuperscript{155} with me, both at a\textsuperscript{156} birth,
Shall lose\textsuperscript{157} me. What, in a town of war
Yet wild,\textsuperscript{158} the people’s hearts brimful of fear,
To manage\textsuperscript{159} private and domestic\textsuperscript{160} quarrel,
In night, and on the court and guard of safety?\textsuperscript{161}
’Tis monstrous.\textsuperscript{162} Iago, who began’t?

Montano (to Iago) If partially affined, or leagued in office,\textsuperscript{163}
Thou dost deliver more or less than truth,
Thou art no soldier.

Iago Touch\textsuperscript{164} me not so near.\textsuperscript{165}
I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth

\textsuperscript{148} act, take action
\textsuperscript{149} best swordsmen/fighters
\textsuperscript{150} go under/to hell, be swallowed, perish
\textsuperscript{151} reprimand (often, then, given by blows)
\textsuperscript{152} riot, disturbance, uproar
\textsuperscript{153} set it on = instigated/incited/set in motion/started it
\textsuperscript{154} proved, convicted
\textsuperscript{155} been born as one of a pair of twins
\textsuperscript{156} at a = at one and the same
\textsuperscript{157} be separated from, deprived of
\textsuperscript{158} unruly, turbulent, highly excited
\textsuperscript{159} carry on, conduct
\textsuperscript{160} internal
\textsuperscript{161} protection
\textsuperscript{162} absurd, outrageously wrong, atrocious
\textsuperscript{163} partially affined, or leagued in office = unfairly/in any biased way related/
connected, or joined in duty/service
\textsuperscript{164} strike, beat at, affect*
\textsuperscript{165} deeply
Than it should do offense\textsuperscript{166} to Michael Cassio. Yet I persuade myself, to speak the truth Shall nothing wrong him. Thus it is, general. Montano and myself being in speech, 

There comes a fellow crying out for help, And Cassio following him with determined\textsuperscript{167} sword, To execute upon\textsuperscript{168} him. Sir, this gentleman Steps in to\textsuperscript{169} Cassio and entreats his pause. Myself the crying\textsuperscript{170} fellow did pursue, Lest by his clamor\textsuperscript{171} – as it so fell out\textsuperscript{172} – The town might fall in\textsuperscript{173} fright. He, swift of foot, Outran my purpose, and I returned the rather\textsuperscript{174} For that I heard the clink and fall\textsuperscript{175} of swords, And Cassio high in oath.\textsuperscript{176} Which till tonight

I ne’er might say before. When I came back, For this was brief, I found them\textsuperscript{177} close together At blow and thrust, even as again they were When you yourself did part them. More of this matter cannot I report, But men are men. The best sometimes forget. Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{166} harm, injury
\textsuperscript{167} unwavering
\textsuperscript{168} execute upon = (1) use/wield it on, (2) kill
\textsuperscript{169} steps in to = comes forward to, intervenes with
\textsuperscript{170} roaring, shouting
\textsuperscript{171} noisy utterance
\textsuperscript{172} fell out = happened, came to pass
\textsuperscript{173} fall in = yield to
\textsuperscript{174} the rather = all the more quickly
\textsuperscript{175} clink and fall = sharp ringing sounds and downward strokes
\textsuperscript{176} high in oath = forcefully/strongly/loudly swearing
\textsuperscript{177} Montano and Cassio
\textsuperscript{178} Montano
As men in rage strike those that wish them best,
Yet surely Cassio, I believe, received
From him that fled some strange indignity,\(^{179}\)
Which patience could not pass.\(^{180}\)

_**Othello**_  
I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and love doth mince\(^{181}\) this matter,
Making it light\(^{182}\) to Cassio. Cassio, I love thee,
But never more be officer of mine.

**enter Desdemona, attended**

Look, if my gentle love be not raised up.

_(to Cassio)_ I’ll make thee an example.\(^{183}\)

_**Desdemona**_  
What is the matter, dear?

_**Othello**_  
All’s well now, sweeting.\(^{184}\)
Come away to bed. (to _Montano_) Sir, for your hurts,
Myself will be\(^{185}\) your surgeon.\(^{186}\) Lead him off.

**exit Montano, attended**

Iago, look with care about the town,
And silence those whom this vile\(^{187}\) brawl distracted.\(^{188}\)
Come, Desdemona, ’tis the soldier’s life,

---

\(^{179}\) _strange indignity_ = uncommon/ exceptional/ extreme dishonor/ disgrace  
\(^{180}\) _accept, allow, tolerate_  
\(^{181}\) _diminish, lessen, minimize_  
\(^{182}\) _of reduced weight/ importance_  
\(^{183}\) _warning*_  
\(^{184}\) _sweetheart, darling_  
\(^{185}\) _myself will be = for my part ("on my side/ as for me"), I wish to be responsible for_  
\(^{186}\) _medical man, doctor_*  
\(^{187}\) _disgusting, depraved_  
\(^{188}\) _carried away/ into disorder_
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.  

_Iago_ Marry, heaven 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 wound. There is more 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 in his mood, a punishment more in policy than in malice, even so as one would beat his offenseless dog to affright an imperious lion. Sue to him again, and he is yours.

---

189 delightful, soothing
190 medical treatment
191 mere animal
192 you were saying that you
193 (1) capacity for sensation, (2) common sense, intelligence
194 ascription, bestowal, placing on
195 consider, think, reckon
196 regained, win back
197 discarded, cashiered, thrown off
198 anger, temper
199 a stratagem
200 ill-will
201 frighten, intimidate
202 overbearing (?), majestic (?)
203 appeal, petition (verb)
Cassio  I will rather\textsuperscript{204} sue to be despised than to deceive\textsuperscript{205} so
good a commander with so slight,\textsuperscript{206} so drunken, and so
indiscreet\textsuperscript{207} an officer. Drunk? And speak parrot?\textsuperscript{208} And
squabble? Swagger?\textsuperscript{209} Swear? And discourse fustian\textsuperscript{210} with
one’s own shadow?\textsuperscript{211} O thou 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?

Cassio  I know not.

Iago  Is’t possible?

Cassio  I remember a mass\textsuperscript{212} of things, but nothing distinctly. A
quarrel, but nothing\textsuperscript{213} 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.

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\textsuperscript{214} despise myself.

Iago  Come, you are too severe a moraler.\textsuperscript{215} As the time, the

\textsuperscript{204} will rather = would prefer to
\textsuperscript{205} betray
\textsuperscript{206} feeble, foolish, worthless, insignificant
\textsuperscript{207} lacking judgment, imprudent
\textsuperscript{208} senselessly
\textsuperscript{209} bluster, act superior
\textsuperscript{210} gibberish, rant, bombast
\textsuperscript{211} someone/something completely fleeting/ephemeral/delusive
\textsuperscript{212} amorphous lump, a quantity
\textsuperscript{213} nothing about
\textsuperscript{214} unreservedly, unconditionally
\textsuperscript{215} moralizer
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.

_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 ingredient is a devil.

_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 parts and graces. Confess

---

216 happened, occurred
217 if I ask
218 mythological many-headed snake, whose heads grew back as fast as they were cut off
219 plug, close up
220 first
221 immoderate, intemperate
222 substance that enters into it
223 (1) friendly, tame, congenial (2) ordinary, everyday
224 a time = some time
225 must
226 connection
227 beholding/thinking about
228 attention, notice
229 indications, appearances*
yourself freely to her. Importune her help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, 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.

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.

Iago  You are in the right. Goodnight, lieutenant, I must to the watch.

Cassio  Good night, honest Iago.

exit Cassio

Iago  And what’s he, then, that says I play the villain?

When this advice is free I give, and honest,
Probable to thinking, and indeed the course
to win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
The 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 redeemèd sin —
His soul is so enfettered 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,
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 fortune,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,

243 reasonable
244 well-disposed, willing
245 get the better of, persuade
246 petition (noun)
247 generous
248 free elements = abundant basic matter (earth, water, air, fire)
249 even if it were / meant
250 authenticating tokens / signs
251 desire, inclination
252 moral / intellectual powers
253 in appearance, having the same direction as good advice would advise
254 want to
255 propose, put forward, insinuate
256 Cassio
257 works hard at ("leans on")
258 recover
I’ll pour this pestilence\textsuperscript{259} into his ear  
That she repeals\textsuperscript{260} him for her body’s lust.  
And by how much she strives to do him\textsuperscript{261} good,  
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.  
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,\textsuperscript{262}  
And out of her own goodness make the net  
That shall enmesh them all.  

\textbf{enter Roderigo}

\textit{How now, Roderigo!}

\textit{Roderigo} I do follow here in the chase, not like a hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry.\textsuperscript{263} My money is almost spent, I have been tonight exceedingly well cudgeled, 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.

\textit{Iago} How poor are they that have not 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\textsuperscript{264} time.  
Does’t not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee,  
And thou by that small hurt hast cashiered Cassio.  
Though other things grow fair against\textsuperscript{265} the sun,  
Yet fruits that blossom first, will first be ripe.

\textsuperscript{259} mischief  
\textsuperscript{260} (1) calls upon him, (2) urges the withdrawal of his cashiering of Cassio  
\textsuperscript{261} Cassio  
\textsuperscript{262} black tar  
\textsuperscript{263} baying and barking of the hunting pack  
\textsuperscript{264} slow, delaying  
\textsuperscript{265} in the light of, when exposed to
Content thyself awhile. In troth, tis morning, Pleasure, and action, make the hours seem short. Retire thee, go where thou art billeted. 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 a while to draw the Moor apart, 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

266 (exclamatory remark: troth = truth)
267 retire thee = withdraw*
268 quartered
269 speak, urge
270 at the same time ("the while": while = a block/bit of time)
271 to the side, away*
272 dull not device = let the plan not be held back/blunted
273 apathy, indifference
Act 3

Scene 1
A street

Enter Cassio and Musicians

Cassio: Masters, play here, I will content\(^1\) your pains,
Something that's brief, and bid\(^2\) "good morrow, general."

Music

Enter Clown

Clown: Why, masters, have your instruments been in Naples,\(^4\) that they speak\(^5\) i' the nose thus?

Musician: How, sir? how?

---

1. compensate, remunerate ("satisfy")
2. will offer/present
3. (Furness, ed., Othello: A New Variorum Edition, 1541, cites Brand, Popular Antiquities (1873): "The custom of awaking a couple the morning after the marriage with a concert of music, is old standing")
4. (Italy was then – and for almost 300 years more – much divided, politically and linguistically; northern Italian like that of Naples is still stigmatized:
compare napoletanismo, "Neapolitan way of talking," and napoletanamenti, "in the style of Naples")
5. speak = (1) talk, (2) emit musical sound
Clown Are these, I pray you, wind instruments?
Musician 1 Ay, marry, are they, sir.
Clown O, thereby hangs a tale.
Musician 1 Whereby hangs a tale, sir?
Clown Marry, sir, by many a wind instrument that I know.
But 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.
Musician 1 Well, sir, we will not.
Clown If you have any music that may not be heard, to’t again. But, as they say, to hear music the general does not greatly care.
Musician 1 We have none such, sir.
Clown Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I’ll away.
10
20
exeunt Musicians

Cassio Dost thou hear, mine honest friend?
Clown No, I hear not your honest friend. I hear you.
Cassio Pr’ythee, 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 favor of speech. Wilt thou do this?
Clown She is stirring, sir. If she will stir hither I shall seem

6 farting (“tail”)
7 to’t again = go to it/play again
8 (meaning uncertain)
9 keep up = stop
10 verbally based jokes
11 small, inadequate
12 deign
to notify unto her.

Cassio  Do, good my friend.13

exit Clown

enter Iago

In happy time,14 Iago.

Iago  You have not been a-bed, then?

Cassio  Why no. The day had broke before we parted.

I have made bold, Iago, to send15 in to your wife.

My suit to her is that she will to virtuous

Desdemona procure16 me some access.

Iago  I'll send her to you presently.

And I'll devise17 a mean18 to draw the Moor

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 Florentine19 more kind and honest.

enter Emilia

Emilia  Good morrow,20 good lieutenant. I am sorry

13 (line from the Quarto)
14 in happy time = well met
15 send a message
16 if her name is here pronounced DESDEYmona, proCURE; if pronounced DESdeMona, then PROcure
17 arrange, invent
18 means (French moyen)
19 even someone from my own city (Cassio is a Florentine)
20 morning, day
For your displeasure. But all will sure be well. 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 And needs no other suitor but his likings 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 With Desdemona 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
ACT 3 • SCENE 2

SCENE 2
The Citadel

enter Othello, Iago, and Gentlemen

Othello    These letters give, Iago, to the pilot,¹
            And by² him do my duties³ to the Senate.
            That done,⁴ I will be walking on the works.⁵
            Repair there to me.
Iago       Well,⁶ my good lord, I’ll do’t.
Othello    This fortification, gentlemen, shall we see’t?
Gentlemen  We’ll wait upon⁷ your lordship.

EXEUNT

¹ (of the ship returning to Venice, on which his guests have arrived in Cyprus)
² through, by means of
³ do my duties = express my respect/homage/deference
⁴ after you have done that
⁵ the works = the Citadel's fortifications
⁶ very well
⁷ wait upon = defer to, follow
enter Desdemona, Cassio, and Emilia

Desdemona  Be thou assured, good Cassio, I will do
           All my abilities\(^1\) in thy behalf.

Emilia    Good madam, do. I warrant it grieves my husband
           As if the cause\(^2\) were his.

Desdemona O, that’s an honest fellow. Do not doubt, Cassio,
           But I will have my lord and you again
           As friendly\(^3\) as you were.

Cassio    Bounteous\(^4\) 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\(^5\) stand no farther off
           Than in\(^6\) a politic\(^7\) distance.

Cassio    Ay, but, lady,
           That policy may either last so long,
           Or feed upon such nice and waterish\(^8\) diet,
           Or breed\(^9\) itself so out of circumstance,\(^10\)

1  my abilities = of which I am capable
2  affair, business*
3  amicable
4  kind, generous
5  aloofness, coolness
6  than in = than
7  prudent, wise
8  nice and waterish = delicate* and watery/dilute
9  develop
10 context, environment
That, I being absent, and my place supplied,\textsuperscript{11}
My general will forget my love and service.

\textit{Desdemona} Do not doubt\textsuperscript{12} that. Before Emilia here
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,
If I do vow\textsuperscript{13} a friendship, I’ll perform it
To the last article.\textsuperscript{14} My lord shall never rest,
I’ll watch\textsuperscript{15} him tame, and talk\textsuperscript{16} him out of\textsuperscript{17} patience.
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift,\textsuperscript{18}
I’ll intermingle everything he does
With Cassio’s suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio,
For thy solicitor shall rather die
Than give thy cause away.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{Emilia} Madam, here comes my lord.

\textit{Cassio} Madam, I’ll take my leave.

\textit{Desdemona} Why, stay, and hear me speak.

\textit{Cassio} Madam, not now. I am very ill at ease,
Unfit for mine own purposes.

\textit{Desdemona} Well, do your discretion.\textsuperscript{20}

exit \textit{Cassio}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} filled up
\item \textsuperscript{12} fear
\item \textsuperscript{13} declare, affirm, assert
\item \textsuperscript{14} detailed item/part
\item \textsuperscript{15} guard, be vigilant/alert, keep awake (as one keeps a hawk from sleeping, in taming it)
\item \textsuperscript{16} talk to
\item \textsuperscript{17} out of = beyond, past
\item \textsuperscript{18} board a shrift = eating/food a penance
\item \textsuperscript{19} give . . . away = concede, sacrifice
\item \textsuperscript{20} your discretion = as you think best
\end{itemize}
enter Othello and Iago

35 Iago Ha? I like not that.
Othello What dost thou say?
Iago Nothing, my lord. Or if — I know not what.
Othello Was not that Cassio parted21 from my wife?
Iago Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it

That he would steal away22 so guilty-like,
Seeing you coming.
Othello I do believe ’twas he.

Desdemona How now, my lord?

I have been talking with a suitor here,
A man that languishes23 in your displeasure.

Othello Who is’t you mean?24

Desdemona Why, your lieutenant, Cassio. Good my lord,
If I have any grace or power to move25 you,
His present reconciliation26 take.
For if he be not one that truly loves you,
That errs in ignorance, and not in cunning,
I have no judgment in27 an honest face.
I prithee, call him back.

Othello Went he hence now?28
Desdemona Ay sooth,29 so humbled
That he hath left part of his grief with me
To suffer with him. Good love, call him back.

_The_ **Othello**  Not now, sweet _Desdemona_, some other time.

_The_ **Desdemona**  But shall't be shortly?

_The_ **Othello**  The sooner, sweet, for _you_.

_The_ **Desdemona**  Shall't be tonight at supper?

_The_ **Othello**  No, not tonight.

_The_ **Desdemona**  Tomorrow dinner then?

_The_ **Othello**  I shall not dine at home.

I meet the captains at the Citadel.

_The_ **Desdemona**  Why then tomorrow night, on Tuesday morn,

On Tuesday noon, or night, on Wednesday morn.

I prythee, 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 examples

Out of their best – is not almost a fault

To incur a private check. When shall he come?

Tell me, _Othello_. I wonder in my soul

What you would ask me, that I should deny,

Or stand so mamm'ring on? What? Michael Cassio,

That came a-wooing with you? And so many a time,

When I have spoke of you disparagingly,

---

_30_ endure
_31_ because of
_32_ sin, offense
_33_ the wars = warfare
_34_ for the most part, usually
_35_ defect, imperfection, flaw
_36_ personal
_37_ mamm'ring on = hesitating about
Hath ta’en your part – to have so much to-do\(^{38}\)

To bring him in? Trust me, I could do much –

Othello Prythee, no more. Let him come when he will. I will deny thee nothing.

Desdemona Why, this is not a boon.\(^{39}\)

’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,\(^{40}\) and difficult weight, And fearful to be granted.

Othello I will deny\(^{41}\) thee nothing.

Whereon,\(^{42}\) I do beseech thee, grant me this, To leave me but a little to myself.

Desdemona Shall I deny you? No. Farewell, my lord.

Othello Farewell, my Desdemona. I’ll come to thee straight.

Desdemona Emilia, come. (to Othello) Be as your fancies\(^{43}\) teach you.

Whate’er you be, I am obedient.\(^{44}\)

exeunt Desdemona and Emilia

Othello Excellent wretch.\(^{45}\) Perdition catch my soul,

\(^{38}\) to do = fuss

\(^{39}\) favor, gift

\(^{40}\) importance, gravity

\(^{41}\) say no to, refuse

\(^{42}\) whereupon

\(^{43}\) moods, imaginings, judgment

\(^{44}\) dutiful, submissive

\(^{45}\) miserable/unfortunate person/little creature
But I do love thee. And when I love thee not, 
Chaos is come again.

_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.\footnote{evil}

_Othello_  Why\footnote{is it} 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\footnote{perceive} 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? Alas, thou echo’st me, 
As if there were some monster in thy thought 
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something. 
I heard thee say even now, thou lik’dst not that, 
When Cassio left my wife. What didst not like? 
And when I told thee he was of\footnote{in} my counsel

\footnotesize{46 evil \hfill 47 is it \hfill 48 perceive \hfill 49 in}
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst, “Indeed?”

And didst contract\(^{50}\) and purse\(^{51}\) thy brow together,

As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain

Some horrible conceit.\(^{52}\) If thou dost love me,

Show me thy thought.

_**Iago**_

My lord, you know I love you.

_**Othello**_ I think thou dost.

And for\(^{53}\) 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.

For such things in a false disloyal knave

Are tricks of custom.\(^{54}\) But in a man that’s just,

They’re close dilations,\(^{55}\) working from the heart,

That passion cannot rule.

_**Iago**_ For\(^{56}\) Michael Cassio,

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.

_**Othello**_ Nay, yet there’s more in this?

I prythee speak to me as to\(^{57}\) thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate,\(^{58}\) 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,
I am not bound to that\(^ {59}\) all slaves are free to.\(^ {60}\)
Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false?
As where’s that palace,\(^ {61}\) whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not? Who has a breast so pure
But some uncleanly apprehensions\(^ {62}\)
Keep leets and law–days,\(^ {63}\) and in session\(^ {64}\) sit
With meditations\(^ {65}\) lawful?

*Othello* Thou dost conspire against thy friend,\(^ {66}\) Iago,
If thou but think’st\(^ {67}\) him wronged and mak’st his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.

*Iago* I do beseech you,

Though I perchance am vicious\(^ {68}\) in my guess –
As I confess it is my nature’s plague
To spy into abuses,\(^ {69}\) and of\(^ {70}\) my jealousy

---

58 ponder, consider, chew over
59 that which
60 from (an old German song declares that, though tyrants may jail us, *Die Gedanken sind frei,* “Our thoughts are free”)
61 palatial/heavenly mansion
62 uncleanly apprehensions = impure/wicked thoughts/feelings
63 leets and law–days = courts convened by the lords of manors and the sheriff (“local courts”)
64 conference, meeting
65 contemplation, conversation
66 thy friend = Othello himself
67 but think’st = so much as/even think
68 depraved, wicked
69 deceits, wrongs
70 out of, from
Shape faults that are not\(^71\) – that your wisdom
From one\(^72\) that so imperfectly conceits\(^73\)
Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble\(^74\)
Out of his scattering\(^75\) and unsure observance.\(^76\)
It were not\(^77\) for your quiet nor your good,
Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

\(155\) Othello What dost thou mean?

Iago Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate\(^78\) jewel of their souls.\(^79\)
Who steals my purse steals trash. 'Tis something, nothing,
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands.

But he that filches\(^80\) from me my good name
Rob's me of that which not\(^81\) enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Othello By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts.

Iago You cannot, if\(^82\) my heart were in your hand;
Nor shall not, whilst 'tis in my custody.\(^83\)

Ha?

Othello O, beware, my lord, of jealousy,

\(71\) are not = (1) do not exist, (2) are not faults
\(72\) someone (himself)
\(73\) perceives, thinks, imagines
\(74\) worry, distress, misfortune
\(75\) erratic, rambling
\(76\) observations, watching
\(77\) were not = would not be
\(78\) primary
\(79\) is THE imMEdyut JEWel OF their SOULS
\(80\) steals, robs
\(81\) does not
\(82\) even if
\(83\) care, safekeeping, protection
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.
But O, what damned minutes tells he o’er
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves?

Othello: O misery!

Iago: Poor and content is rich, and rich enough,
    But riches fineless is as poor as winter
    To him that ever fears he shall be poor.
    Good heaven, 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
    With fresh suspicions? No. To be once in doubt
    Is 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

84 green: traditionally associated with either (1) growth, health, or (2) putrid matter, fear, sickness, jealousy
85 man whose wife has been unfaithful
86 what has happened
87 the wife who wrongs him
88 counts
89 unlimited (“without end”)
90 tribe defend = family avert/ward off/repel
91 why is this = why are you saying these things?
92 settled, convinced, free from doubt
93 center, revolve, construct
94 on
95 exsufflicate and blown = inflated/windy/puffed up and whispered/hinted
96 implied/suggested conclusion
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. 
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw 
The smallest fear, or doubt of her revolt, 
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 it. For now I shall have reason 
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. 
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 heaven see the pranks

97 eats
98 free of speech = (1) well spoken, ready (2) unrestrained, spontaneous, frank
99 is FREE of SPEECH sings PLAYS and DAnces WELL (sings PLAYS: a prosodic convention, not to be confused with how the line was actually spoken)
100 even more
101 uncertainty
102 in that way
103 obliged in duty
104 use
105 out of self-bounty = from its own goodness/kindness/virtue
106 our country disposition = (1) my native country’s (Venice’s)? or (2) the rural/rustic arrangement/manner? (the former parallels the next line, but the latter is in contrast to it)
107 women
They dare not show their husbands. Their best conscience\textsuperscript{108} is not to leave undone,\textsuperscript{109} but keep unknown.

\textit{Othello}  Dost thou say so?

\textit{Iago}  She did deceive her father, marrying you, and when she seemed to shake and fear your looks, she loved them most.

\textit{Othello}  And so she did.

\textit{Iago}  Why, go to then. She that, so young, could give out such a seeming, to seal her father’s eyes up close\textsuperscript{110} as oak, he thought ’twas witchcraft. But I am much to blame.\textsuperscript{111} I humbly do beseech you of your pardon for too much loving you.

\textit{Othello}  I am bound to thee for ever.

\textit{Iago}  I see this hath a little dashed\textsuperscript{112} your spirits.

\textit{Othello}  Not a jot,\textsuperscript{113} not a jot.

\textit{Iago}  Trust me, I fear it has.

I hope you will consider what\textsuperscript{114} is spoke comes from my love. But I do see you’re moved.

I am to pray you not to strain\textsuperscript{115} my speech to grosser issues, nor to larger reach\textsuperscript{116} than to suspicion.

\textit{Othello}  I will not.

\textsuperscript{108} idea, conviction
\textsuperscript{109} leave undone = refrain from doing
\textsuperscript{110} dense
\textsuperscript{111} to blame = to be censured/criticized
\textsuperscript{112} cast down, depressed, discouraged
\textsuperscript{113} the least little bit
\textsuperscript{114} that what
\textsuperscript{115} push, force, stretch, extend
\textsuperscript{116} range, application
Iago

Should you do so, my lord,
My speech should fall into such\(^{117}\) vile success
Which\(^{118}\) my thoughts aimed not. Cassio’s my worthy friend.
My lord, I see you’re moved.

Othello

No, not much moved.
I do not think but\(^{119}\) 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,

Not to affect\(^{120}\) many proposed matches,\(^{121}\)
Of her own clime,\(^{122}\) complexion,\(^{123}\) and degree,
Whereto we see in all things nature tends.
Foh! One may smell\(^{124}\) in such a will\(^{125}\) most rank,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.

But pardon me, I do not in position\(^{126}\)
Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
Her will, recoiling\(^{127}\) to her better judgment,
May fall to match you\(^{128}\) with her country forms,
And happily\(^{129}\) repent.

Othello
Farewell, farewell.

\(^{117}\) the kind of
\(^{118}\) at which
\(^{119}\) do not think but = I think only that
\(^{120}\) seek, choose, like
\(^{121}\) marriages*
\(^{122}\) (1) region, (2) climate
\(^{123}\) (1) character, disposition, (2) skin color, appearance, face*
\(^{124}\) perceive, suspect, find
\(^{125}\) (1) nature, inclination, (2) passion, carnal appetite
\(^{126}\) affirmative statement/ assertion
\(^{127}\) returning, going back
\(^{128}\) fall to match you = decline/descend to link/pair/compare you
\(^{129}\) perhaps (“haply”)
If more thou dost perceive, let me know more.
Set on thy wife to observe. Leave me, Iago.

Iago My lord, I take my leave.

exit Iago

Othello Why did I marry? This honest creature doubtless Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds.

Iago returns

Iago My lord, I would I might entreat your honor To scan this thing no farther. Leave it to time, Althougt '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, 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 meantime, Let me be thought too busy in my fears, As worthy cause I have to fear I am, And hold her free, I do beseech your honor.

Othello Fear not my government.

Iago I once more take my leave.

exit Iago

130 set on = direct, arrange for, urge
131 I would I might = I want to, let me
132 analyze, test, examine
133 (1) become aware of, understand, (2) see through, recognize
134 his entertainment = her support of him
135 excessive zeal
136 (1) active, diligent, (2) meddling, nosy
137 (1) conduct, behavior, (2) discretion
Othello  This fellow’s of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities,\textsuperscript{138} with a learnèd spirit,
\[260\]
Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,\textsuperscript{139}
Though that her jesses\textsuperscript{140} were my dear heartstrings,
I’d whistle her off,\textsuperscript{141} and let her down the wind\textsuperscript{142}
To prey at fortune.\textsuperscript{143} Haply for\textsuperscript{144} I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
\[265\]
That chamberers\textsuperscript{145} have, or for I am declined\textsuperscript{146}
Into the vale\textsuperscript{147} of years — yet that’s\textsuperscript{148} not much —
She’s gone.\textsuperscript{149} I am abused, and my relief\textsuperscript{150}
Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
\[270\]
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapor of a dungeon,
Than keep\textsuperscript{151} a corner in the thing I love
For others’ uses. Yet, ’tis the plague of great ones,
Prerogatived\textsuperscript{152} are they less than the base.
\[275\]
’Tis destiny unshunnable, like death.

\textsuperscript{138} characters, natures
\textsuperscript{139} wild, untamable (from hawk training: adult females caught too late to be trained)
\textsuperscript{140} leg straps for leashing hawks
\textsuperscript{141} whistle her off = send her away, abandon her
\textsuperscript{142} down the wind = free
\textsuperscript{143} prey at fortune = hunt however she liked
\textsuperscript{144} haply for = maybe it is because
\textsuperscript{145} gallants
\textsuperscript{146} fallen, drooped, sunk
\textsuperscript{147} valley
\textsuperscript{148} yet that’s = that’s still/as yet
\textsuperscript{149} undone, ruined
\textsuperscript{150} (1) deliverance, alleviation, release, (2) help, assistance, support
\textsuperscript{151} maintain, preserve, retain, hold back
\textsuperscript{152} privileged
Even then this forkèd\textsuperscript{153} plague is fated to us
When we do quicken,\textsuperscript{154}

\textbf{enter Desdemona and Emilia}

Look where she comes.

If she be false, heaven mocked itself.
I’ll not believe’t.

\textit{Desdemona} \hspace{1cm} How now, my dear Othello?
Your dinner, and the generous islanders\textsuperscript{155}
By you invited, do attend\textsuperscript{156} your presence.

\textit{Othello} \hspace{1cm} I am to blame.

\textit{Desdemona} \hspace{1cm} Why do you speak so faintly?\textsuperscript{157}
Are you not well?

\textit{Othello} \hspace{1cm} I have a pain upon\textsuperscript{158} my forehead, here.

\textit{Desdemona} \hspace{1cm} Why, that’s with watching,\textsuperscript{159} ’twill away again.
Let me but bind it hard,\textsuperscript{160} within this hour
It will be well.

\textit{Othello} \hspace{1cm} Your napkin\textsuperscript{161} is too little.

\textbf{he pushes the handkerchief away, and it falls}

Let it alone. Come, I’ll go in with you.

\textit{Desdemona} \hspace{1cm} I am very sorry that you are not well.

\textbf{exeunt Othello and Desdemona}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{153} horned (cuckolds wear horns)
  \item \textsuperscript{154} when we do quicken = (1) when we are given life/conceived, (2) while we are alive
  \item \textsuperscript{155} generous islanders = high-born/noble Cypriots
  \item \textsuperscript{156} await, look forward to
  \item \textsuperscript{157} (1) feebly, weakly, (2) almost imperceptibly
  \item \textsuperscript{158} in
  \item \textsuperscript{159} (1) being on guard/vigilant, (2) insufficient sleep
  \item \textsuperscript{160} tightly
  \item \textsuperscript{161} handkerchief
\end{itemize}
Emilia picks up the handkerchief

Emilia  I am glad I have found this napkin.
        This was her first remembrance\textsuperscript{162} from the Moor,
        My wayward\textsuperscript{163} husband hath a hundred times
        Wooed\textsuperscript{164} me to steal it. But she so loves the token\textsuperscript{165} –
        For he conjured\textsuperscript{166} her she should ever keep it –
        That she reserves\textsuperscript{167} it evermore about her
        To kiss and talk to. I’ll have the work taken out,\textsuperscript{168}
        And give’t Iago. What he will do with it
        Heaven knows, not I,
        I nothing\textsuperscript{169} 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.\textsuperscript{170}

Emilia  Hah?

Iago  To have a foolish wife.

Emilia  O, is that all? What will you give me now
        For that same handkerchief?

Iago  What handkerchief?

Emilia  What handkerchief?

\textsuperscript{162} keepsake  
\textsuperscript{163} stubborn, perverse, willful  
\textsuperscript{164} entreated, solicited, tempted  
\textsuperscript{165} gift, present*  
\textsuperscript{166} charged, constrained  
\textsuperscript{167} retains, holds back  
\textsuperscript{168} work taken out = needlework/embroidery copied  
\textsuperscript{169} (1) do nothing, (2) wish  
\textsuperscript{170} female genitalia
Why that the Moor first gave to Desdemona,
    That which so often you did bid me steal.

_Iago_ Hast stolen it from her?

_Emilia_ No. But 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.

_Emilia_ (not giving it) What will you do with’t, that you have
    been so earnest
    To have me filch it?

_Iago_ (snatches it) Why, what is 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 acknowledg’d on’t. 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.
ACT 3 • SCENE 3

The Moor already changes with my poison.181
325 Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
Which at the first182 are scarce found to distaste,183
But with a little act184 upon the blood
Burn like the mines185 of sulphur. (seeing Othello approach)
330 I did say so.

Look, where he comes. Not poppy,186 nor mandragora,187
Nor all the drowsy syrups188 of the world,
Shall ever medicine189 thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou ow’dst yesterday.

enter Othello

Othello Ha, ha, false to me?
Iago Why, how now, general? No more of that.
335 Othello Avaunt,190 be gone. Thou hast set me on the rack.191
   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, was free and merry.
   I found not Cassio’s kisses on her lips.

181 with my poison = from/because of my harmful/baleful influence
182 at the first = at first
183 scarce found to distaste = seldom experienced/met with dislike/disgust
184 with a little act = after brief action
185 like the mines = like mines
186 used as a sleeping potion (“opium”)
187 mandrake: another much-used sleeping medicine
188 drowsy syrups = sleep-inducing liquids (herb plus sugar)
189 medicate
190 go away
191 torture rack
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.

*Othello*  I had been happy if the general camp, 
Pioneers 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, 
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! 
And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats 
The immortal Jove’s dread clamors counterfeit, 
Farewell. Othello’s occupation’s gone.

*Iago*  Is’t possible, my lord?

*Othello*  (seizing him) Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore, 
Be sure of it. Give me the ocular proof,

---

192 lacking
193 troops*
194 infantrymen who dig, build, repair
195 as long as
196 wearing feathers on their headgear
197 great, mighty
198 make ambition = turn ambition into
199 shrill trump = sharp/high-pitched trumpet
200 ensign, flag
201 pride POMP and CIRCumSTANCE of GLORious WAR
202 mechanical contrivances: cannon
203 loud outbursts (“thunder”)
204 occupation’s = calling/profession is
205 visual
Or by the worth of mine eternal soul
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my wakèd\textsuperscript{206} wrath!

\textit{Iago} Is’t\textsuperscript{207} come to this?

\textit{Othello} Make me to see’t, or at the least so prove it
That the probation\textsuperscript{208} bear no hinge nor loop\textsuperscript{209}
To hang a doubt on, or woe upon thy life!

\textit{Iago} My noble lord –

\textit{Othello} If thou dost slander her, and torture me,
Never pray more.\textsuperscript{210} Abandon all remorse,\textsuperscript{211}
On horror’s head horrors accumulate,\textsuperscript{212}
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amazed,
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than that.

\textit{Iago} O grace! O heaven forgive me!
Are you a man? Have you a soul or sense? –

\textit{Othello} God be wi’you.\textsuperscript{213} Take\textsuperscript{214} mine office. O wretchèd fool,\textsuperscript{215}
That liv’st to make thine honesty a vice!
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
To be direct\textsuperscript{216} and honest is not safe.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{206} wakened
\item \textsuperscript{207} is’t = has it
\item \textsuperscript{208} proof
\item \textsuperscript{209} no hinge nor loop = neither that which turns/moves nor that which contains an opening
\item \textsuperscript{210} again (for a faithful Christian, spiritual death)
\item \textsuperscript{211} contrition, repentance
\item \textsuperscript{212} on horror’s head horrors accumulate = on top of/in addition to horror pile up even more horrors
\item \textsuperscript{213} God be wi’you = good-bye
\item \textsuperscript{214} remove/receive back/accept
\item \textsuperscript{215} himself, for trying to “help” Othello
\item \textsuperscript{216} straightforward
\end{itemize}
I thank you for this profit, and from hence
I’ll love no friend, sith²¹⁷ love breeds such offense.

_Othello_  Nay, stay. Thou shouldst²¹⁸ be honest.

_Iago_  I should be wise, for honesty’s a fool,
And loses that²¹⁹ it works for.

_Othello_  By the world,²²⁰
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not.
I think that thou art just, and think thou art not.
I’ll have²²¹ some proof. My name, that was as fresh
As Dian’s²²² visage, is now begrimed and black
As mine own face. If²²³ there be cords or knives,
Poison or fire, or suffocating streams,²²⁴
I’ll not endure it.²²⁵ Would I were satisfied!

_Iago_  I see, sir, you are eaten up²²⁶ with passion.
I do repent me that I put it to you.
You would be satisfied?

_Othello_  Would? Nay, and I will.

_Iago_  And may. But how? How²²⁷ satisfied, my lord?
Would you, the supervisor,²²⁸ grossly gape on?²²⁹

---
²¹⁷ since
²¹⁸ ought to
²¹⁹ that which
²²⁰ by the world: a common oath
²²¹ I’ll have = I want to have
²²² Diana: the moon
²²³ whether (“whatever it takes/requires”)
²²⁴ suffocating streams = drowning
²²⁵ I’ll not endure it = I will not go on like this
²²⁶ devoured, consumed, gnawed
²²⁷ in what way
²²⁸ spectator, observer (from the Quarto)
²²⁹ gape on = stare, watch
Behold her topped?230

Othello

Death and damnation. O!

Iago

It were a tedious231 difficulty, I think,
To bring them to that prospect.232 Damn them then,
If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster233
More234 than their own. What then? How then?
What shall I say? Where’s satisfaction?
It is impossible you should see this
Were they235 as prime236 as goats, as hot as monkeys,
As salt237 as wolves in pride,238 and fools as gross239
As ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,
If imputation240 and strong circumstances,
Which lead directly to the door of truth,
Will give you satisfaction, you may have’t.

Othello

Give me a living reason241 she’s disloyal.

Iago

I do not like the office.

But sith I am entered242 in this cause so far,
Pricked243 to it by foolish honesty and love,
I will go on. I lay244 with Cassio lately;

230 copulated with ("covered/tupped")
231 (1) wearisome, (2) irksome, disagreeable, painful
232 view, spectacle
233 lie on the same pillow ("have sex together")
234 any eyes more/other
235 were they = even if they were
236 in heat, sexually excited
237 salacious, lecherous
238 heat
239 glaring, total, stupefied
240 attribution, logical analysis
241 living reason = current ("valid") fact ("evidence")
242 involved
243 goaded, spurred, driven
244 shared a bed (for reasons of convenience, lack of space, etc.)
And, being troubled with a raging\textsuperscript{245} tooth, I could not sleep. There are a kind of men, So loose\textsuperscript{246} 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,” And then, sir, would he gripe\textsuperscript{247} and wring my hand, Cry, “O sweet creature,”\textsuperscript{248} then kiss me hard,\textsuperscript{249} As if he plucked\textsuperscript{250} up kisses by the roots That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o’er my thigh, And sigh, and kiss, and then cry “Curs’d fate That gave thee to the Moor!”

\textit{Othello} O monstrous! monstrous!

\textit{Iago} Nay, this was but his dream.

\textit{Othello} But this denoted a foregone\textsuperscript{251} conclusion. ’Tis a shrewd\textsuperscript{252} doubt, though it be but a dream.

\textit{Iago} And this may help to thicken\textsuperscript{253} other proofs That do demonstrate thinly.

\textit{Othello} I’ll tear her all to pieces.

\textit{Iago} Nay, but be wise. Yet\textsuperscript{254} we see nothing done, She may be honest yet.\textsuperscript{255} Tell me but this,

\textsuperscript{245} violently painful
\textsuperscript{246} unrestrained, disconnected, slack, indulgent
\textsuperscript{247} grasp, clutch
\textsuperscript{248} CREEauty
\textsuperscript{249} vigorously, intensely
\textsuperscript{250} pulled, gathered
\textsuperscript{251} already accomplished/occurring
\textsuperscript{252} depraved, wicked
\textsuperscript{253} fill the gaps in
\textsuperscript{254} as yet
\textsuperscript{255} still
Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief
Spotted with strawberries in your wife’s hand?

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 —

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,

All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.
’Tis gone.

Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow hell!
Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
For ’tis of aspics tongues!

Iago   Yet be content.

Othello  O, blood, Iago, blood!

Iago     Patience, I say. Your mind perhaps may change.

Othello  Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic Sea,
        Whose icy current and compulsive course

256 Desdemona? Cassio?
257 (from the Quarto)
258 deep-buried, open, empty
259 fixed in the heart
260 relentless, inexorable, overpowering
261 load, burden
262 asps’
263 Pontic Sea = Black Sea
264 driving/forcing forward
Ne’er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
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
Swallow them up. Now, by yond marble heaven,
In the due reverence of a sacred vow

Othello kneels

I here engage my words.

Iago

Do not rise yet.

Iago kneels

Witness, you ever-burning lights above,
You elements that clip us round about,
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.

265 Sea of Marmora
266 speed
267 modestly satisfied
268 capable and wide = capacious/roomy and broad
269 probably (1) his thoughts, but conceivably (2) Desdemona and Cassio
270 stone-hard, inflexible
271 pledge
272 stars
273 clasp, hug, embrace
274 give up = commit, bestow, grant
275 operation, action, performance
276 without mitigation, solemn obligation
277 what bloody business ever = whatever the bloody business
ACT 3 • SCENE 3

Othello

I greet\(^{278}\) thy love

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\(^{279}\) 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.

exequunt

\(^{278}\) receive, welcome

\(^{279}\) lewd minx = evil/worthless/lascivious woman
ACT 3 • SCENE 4

SCENE 4

A street

enter Desdemona, Emilia, and Clown

Desdemona Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?2
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.
Desdemona Go to. Where lodges he?
Clown To tell you where he lodges is to tell you where I lie.5
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.
Desdemona Can you inquire him out, and be edified by report?
Clown I will catechize 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.

1 form of address used for servants and children
2 lives, lodges
3 tells lies
4 may cause, risks
5 where I lie = what I would be telling lies about
6 made of = derived from, understood by
7 search, seek
8 informed, instructed
9 question, examine, interrogate
10 by means of
Clown To do this is within the compass of man’s wit, and therefore I will attempt the doing it.11

exit Clown

Desdemona Where should I lose12 that handkerchief, Emilia?

Emilia I know not, madam.

Desdemona Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse Full of crusadoes.13 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?

Desdemona Who, he? I think the sun where he was born Drew all such humors14 from him.

Emilia Look where he comes.

Desdemona I will not leave him now till Cassio Be called to him.

enter Othello

How is’t with you, my lord?

Othello Well, my good lady. (aside) O hardness15 to dissemble! 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.

11 of it  
12 where should I lose = where must I have lost  
13 Portuguese coins (cruSEYdoze)  
14 moods  
15 (1) how difficult it is, (2) may I be granted the severity/rigor/endurance
Othello   This argues¹⁶ fruitfulness¹⁷ and liberal heart.  
Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires¹⁸  
A sequester¹⁹ from liberty, fasting,²⁰ and prayer,  
Much castigation,²¹ exercise devout,²²  
For here’s a young and sweating²³ devil, here,  
That commonly²⁴ rebels. ’Tis a good hand,  
A frank one.  

Desdemona   You may, indeed, say so,  
For ’twas that hand that gave away my heart.  

Othello   A liberal hand. The hearts of old gave hands.  
But our new heraldry²⁵ is hands, not hearts.  

Desdemona   I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise.  

Othello   What promise, chuck?²⁶  

Desdemona   I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.  

Othello   (fit of coughing?) I have a salt and sorry rheum²⁷  
offends²⁸ me.  
Lend me thy handkerchief.

¹⁶ this argues = (i) this hand, and/or (2) this feature/line of your hand  
indicates (Othello was surely familiar with the practice of “reading” hands  
by interpretation of their specific and individual characteristics)  
¹⁷ fertility  
¹⁸ hot HOT and MOIST this HAND of YOURS reQUIRES  
¹⁹ isolation, seclusion  
²⁰ and also requires fasting  
²¹ correction, discipline, purification  
²² pious/religious activity/employment  
²³ (because hot and moist, as active devils are)  
²⁴ usually, ordinarily  
²⁵ method/way of showing/exhibiting rank/precedence (the rights  
accompanying rank)  
²⁶ term of endearment  
²⁷ salt and sorry rheum = irritating/vexatious and dismal/distressing mucous  
nasal discharge (“a running cold”)  
²⁸ which attacks
Desdemona
Here, my lord.

Othello (rejecting it) That which I gave you.

Desdemona I have it not about me.

Othello Not?

Desdemona No indeed, my lord.

Othello That is 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
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,
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?

---

29 with
30 gypsy? Egyptian?
31 enchanter, magician
32 Othello’s mother
33 lovable
34 impulses, emotions
35 would necessarily/be obliged to
36 my wife
37 heed on’t = careful attention/ regard of it
38 object of your love
Othello  'Tis true. There's magic in the web\textsuperscript{39} of it.
              A sibyl,\textsuperscript{40} that had numbered\textsuperscript{41} in the world
            The sun to course\textsuperscript{42} two hundred compasses,\textsuperscript{43}
                  In her prophetic fury\textsuperscript{44} sewed the work.
            The worms\textsuperscript{45} were hallowed\textsuperscript{46} that did breed\textsuperscript{47} the silk,
                  And it was dyed in mummy,\textsuperscript{48} which the skillful
                  Conserved of\textsuperscript{49} maiden's hearts.

Desdemona  Indeed? Is't true?
Othello   Most veritable,\textsuperscript{50} therefore look to't well.
Desdemona  Then would to heaven that I had never seen't!
Othello   Ha? Wherefore?
Desdemona  Why do you speak so startingly and rash?\textsuperscript{51}
Othello   Is't lost? Is't gone? Speak, is it out of the way?\textsuperscript{52}
Desdemona  Bless us!
Othello   Say you?\textsuperscript{53}
Desdemona  It is not lost. But what an if\textsuperscript{54} it were?
Othello   How?
Desdemona  I say, it is not lost.

\textsuperscript{39} weaving, fabric
\textsuperscript{40} prophetess, fortune-teller, witch
\textsuperscript{41} been able to count
\textsuperscript{42} run
\textsuperscript{43} circles around the earth (“years”)
\textsuperscript{44} frenzy, passion
\textsuperscript{45} silkworms/caterpillars
\textsuperscript{46} consecrated, sanctified
\textsuperscript{47} generate, produce
\textsuperscript{48} medicinal substance prepared from mummified bodies
\textsuperscript{49} conserved of = preserved from
\textsuperscript{50} truthful, genuine
\textsuperscript{51} startlingly and rash = abruptly and urgently/hastily/impetuously
\textsuperscript{52} out of the way = lost, missing, astray
\textsuperscript{53} say you = what do you say/respond/answer
\textsuperscript{54} what an if = what if
Othello Fetch’t, let me see’t.

Desdemona Why, so I can. 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.

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,

Shared dangers with you.

Othello The handkerchief!

Desdemona In sooth, you are to blame.

Othello Away!

EXIT

Emilia Is not this man jealous?

Desdemona I ne’er saw this before.

Sure there’s some wonder in this handkerchief.

I am most unhappy in the loss of it.

Emilia ’Tis not a year or two shows us a man.

55 turn, divert
56 is apprehensive/suspicious
57 find, come across
58 satisfactory, competent, capable*
59 talk to
60 all his time hath founded = has always based
61 get away
62 some wonder = something miraculous/marvelous
63 ’tis not = it is not just (“it takes more than”)
They are all but stomachs and we all but food,
They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
They belch us. Look you, Cassio and my husband.

enter Cassio and Iago

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 Exist, and be a member of his love, Whom I, with all the office of my heart, Entirely honor. I would not be delayed. If my offense be of such mortal kind That nor my service past, nor present sorrows, 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 To fortune's alms.

Desdemona Alas, thrice-gentle Cassio,

65 hungrily, greedily
66 good luck (seeing Desdemona)
67 a member of = one who participates in (“a part”)
68 would not = do not wish/want
69 fatal, destructive, deadly
70 neither
71 intended
72 redeem, restore
73 just, only
74 involuntary
75 benefactions, gifts
My advocation\(^{76}\) is not now in tune.\(^{77}\)
My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him
Were he in favor as in humor\(^{78}\) altered.
So help me every spirit sanctified
As\(^{79}\) I have spoken for you all my best,
And stood within the blank\(^{80}\) 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.

_Iago_ Is my lord angry?

_Emilia_ He went hence but now,
And certainly in strange unquietness.\(^{81}\)

_Iago_ Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon,
When it hath blown his ranks\(^{82}\) into the air,
And like the devil from his very arm
Puffed\(^{83}\) 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.

_Desdemona_ I prythee do so.

**EXIT IAGO**

_Something sure of state,\(^{84}\)
Either from Venice or some unhatched\(^{85}\) 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 indues
Our other healthful members even to that 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,
And he’s indicted falsely.

**Emilia** Pray heaven it be state matters, as you think,
And no conception nor no jealous toy
Concerning you.
Desdemona  Alas the day, I never gave him cause.
Emilia    But jealous souls will not be answered\(^{105}\) so.

They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous. It is a monster

Begot upon itself, born on itself.
Desdemona  Heaven keep that monster from Othello’s mind!
Emilia     Lady, amen.
Desdemona  I will go seek him. Cassio, walk hereabout.

If I do find him fit, I’ll move your suit,
And seek to effect it to my uttermost.
Cassio     I humbly thank your ladyship.

\textit{exeunt Desdemona and Emilia}

enter Bianca

Bianca     Save\(^{106}\) you, friend Cassio!
Cassio     What make you from\(^{107}\) home?

How is it with you, my most fair Bianca?

Indeed, sweet love, I was coming to your house.
Bianca     And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.

What? Keep a week away? Seven days and nights?
Eight score\(^{108}\) eight hours? And lovers’ absent hours,
More tedious than the dial,\(^{109}\) eight score times?
O weary reckoning.\(^{110}\)

Cassio     Pardon me, Bianca.

\(^{105}\) rebutted, satisfied  
\(^{106}\) may God deliver/protect (a conventional greeting)  
\(^{107}\) make you from = are you doing away from  
\(^{108}\) a score = 20  
\(^{109}\) dial of a clock  
\(^{110}\) calculation, computation
I have this while with leaden thoughts been pressed,
But I shall in a more continuate\textsuperscript{111} time
Strike off this score\textsuperscript{112} of absence. Sweet Bianca,
Take me this work out.

\textbf{he gives her Desdemona’s handkerchief}

\textit{Bianca}  
O Cassio, whence came this?
This is some token from a newer friend.
To the felt\textsuperscript{113} absence now I feel a cause.
Is’t\textsuperscript{114} come to this? Well, well.

\textit{Cassio}  
Go to, woman!
Throw your vile guesses in the devil’s teeth,
From whence you have\textsuperscript{115} them. You are jealous now
That this is from some mistress, some remembrance.
No, in good troth, Bianca.

\textit{Bianca}  
Why, whose is it?

\textit{Cassio}  
I know not neither.\textsuperscript{116} I found it in my chamber,
I like the work well. Ere it be demanded,\textsuperscript{117}
As like enough it will, I’d have it copied.
Take it, and do’t, and leave me for this time.\textsuperscript{118}

\textit{Bianca}  
Leave you? Wherefore?

\textit{Cassio}  
I do attend here on the general,
And think it no addition,\textsuperscript{119} nor my wish,

\textsuperscript{111} more continuate = more lasting/less interrupted
\textsuperscript{112} strike off this score = cancel/pay off this reckoning/tally mark
\textsuperscript{113} perceived, experienced
\textsuperscript{114} is’t = has it
\textsuperscript{115} got
\textsuperscript{116} either
\textsuperscript{117} asked for, requested
\textsuperscript{118} this time = now
\textsuperscript{119} added honor
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.

I pray you bring me on the way a little,¹²⁰

And say if I shall see you soon at night.

_Cassio_ 'Tis but a little way¹²¹ that I can bring you,

For I attend here. But I'll see you soon.

_Bianca_ 'Tis very good. I must be circumstanced.¹²²

_EXEUNT_
SCENE I
A street

enter Othello and Iago

Iago Will you think so?
Othello Think so, Iago?
Iago What, To kiss in private?
Othello An unauthorized\textsuperscript{1} 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?
It is hypocrisy against\textsuperscript{2} the devil.
They that mean virtuously and yet do so,\textsuperscript{3}
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.

\textsuperscript{1} illicit, unsanctioned
\textsuperscript{2} with? in active opposition/resistance to? in the face/presence of? in preparation for?
\textsuperscript{3} things like this (“thus”)
Iago  So⁴ they do nothing, ’tis a venial slip.⁵
But if I give my wife a handkerchief —

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 honor too.
May she give that?
Iago  Her honor is an essence⁶ that’s not seen:
They have it very oft that have it not.⁷
But for the handkerchief —

Othello  By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it.
Thou said’st — O, it comes o’er my memory,
As doth the raven o’er the infected⁹ house,
Boding¹⁰ to all — he had my handkerchief.
Iago  Ay. What of that?
Othello  That’s not so good now.¹¹
Iago  What if I had said I had seen him do you wrong?
Or heard him say — as knaves be such abroad,¹²
Who having, by their own importunate¹³ suit,
Or voluntary dotage¹⁴ of some mistress,
Convinced or supplied¹⁵ them, cannot choose

---

4 if
5 venial slip = forgivable/unimportant (1) error/fault, (2) evasion
6 element, substance, characteristic
7 they often have it by reputation, though not in fact
8 to, across
9 tainted/contaminated with (1) disease/infected properties, (2) evil/diseased
10 portending, presaging
11 now that is not so good
12 at large, all over
13 troublesome, persistent
14 foolishness, infatuation, stupidity
15 convinced or supplied = firmly persuaded or fulfilled/satisfied
But they must blab\textsuperscript{16} –

\begin{footnotesize}
\textit{Othello} \quad Hath he said anything?
\end{footnotesize}

\textit{Iago} \quad He hath, my lord, but be you well assured, No more than he’ll unswear.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textit{Othello} \quad What hath he said?
\end{footnotesize}

\textit{Iago} \quad Why, that he did – I know not what he did.

\textit{Othello} \quad What? what?

\textit{Iago} \quad Lie.

\textit{Othello} \quad With her?

\textit{Iago} \quad With her, on her, what you will.\textit{Othello} \quad Lie with her? Lie on her? We say lie on her,\textsuperscript{17} when they belie\textsuperscript{18} her. Lie with her. That’s fulsome.\textsuperscript{19} Handkerchief – confessions – handkerchief! To confess, and be hanged for his labor, first to be hanged, and then to confess. I tremble at it. Nature would not invest\textsuperscript{20} herself in such shadowing\textsuperscript{21} passion without some instruction.\textsuperscript{22} It is not words that shake me thus. – Pish – Noses, ears, and lips. Is’t possible? Confess – handkerchief! O devil! –

\begin{footnotesize}
\textbf{Othello falls in a trance}
\end{footnotesize}

\textit{Iago} \quad Work on.

My medicine works. Thus credulous fools are caught, And many worthy. And chaste dames even thus, All guiltless, meet reproach. – What ho? my lord? My lord, I say. Othello!

\textsuperscript{16} reveal indiscreetly, tell, chatter
\textsuperscript{17} say lie on her = accuse her of lying
\textsuperscript{18} they belie = her words contradict/give the lie to
\textsuperscript{19} rank, overgrown
\textsuperscript{20} clothe, wrap, enclose
\textsuperscript{21} boding, prefiguring
\textsuperscript{22} information, knowledge
ACT 4 • SCENE 1

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 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,

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 not, by heaven.

Would you would bear your fortune like a man.

Othello A hornèd man’s a monster and a beast.

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.

23 torpor, inertness
24 its
25 at the
26 in, into
27 circumstances, matters
28 cuckolded
29 citizen? civilized? refined?
30 (?) is it certain, then?
Think every bearded fellow that’s but yoked with you. There’s millions now alive 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, and to suppose her chaste. No, let me know, 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 – Cassio came hither. I shifted him away, and laid good ’scuses upon your ecstasy, bade him anon return, and here speak with me, the which he promised. Do but encave yourself, and mark the fleers, gibes, and notable scorns.  

31 consider/realize that  
32 (1) coupled, with a yoke, like a draught animal, (2) married  
33 pull, haul  
34 (1) improper, indecent, (2) common, universal  
35 their own private property  
36 kiss  
37 (1) and knowing what kind of man I am (bold, brave, strong), I know what she will be (dead), (2) and knowing what kind of man I am (burdened with original sin/inherently imperfect), I know what she must be (unfaithful)  
38 boundary, limit  
39 I shifted = by means of indirect/evasive methods, I sent  
40 placed, set  
41 frenzy, fit  
42 enclose, cover up (“hide”)  
43 notable scorns = striking/obvious sneers/gibes/mocking  
44 scoffing, taunting, flouting  
45 notable scorns = remarkable/striking/conspicuous contempt
That dwell\(^{46}\) in every region\(^{47}\) of his face.
For I will make him tell the tale anew,
\[\text{Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when}\]
He hath, and is again to cope\(^{48}\) your wife.
I say, but mark his gesture. Marry, patience,
Or I shall say you’re all in all in spleen,\(^{49}\)
And nothing of a man.

\textit{Othello} \hspace{1em} Dost thou hear, Iago?
\[\text{I will be found most cunning in my patience,}\]
\[\text{But – dost thou hear? – most bloody.}\]

\textit{Iago} \hspace{1em} That’s not amiss,\(^{50}\)
\[\text{But yet keep time}\(^{51}\) in all. Will you withdraw?}\]

\textit{Othello withdraws}

Now will I question Cassio of\(^{52}\) Bianca,
A housewife that, by selling her desires,
Buys herself bread and clothes. It is a creature
That dotes on Cassio – as ’tis the strumpet’s\(^{53}\) plague
To beguile many and be beguiled by one.
He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain
From the excess of laughter. – Here he comes.
As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(46\) abide, inhabit
  \item \(47\) area, part
  \item \(48\) have intercourse with
  \item \(49\) all in all in spleen = altogether/completely in a hot/capricious/peevish temper
  \item \(50\) wrong, out of order
  \item \(51\) the proper pace/speed/tempo
  \item \(52\) about
  \item \(53\) harlot, prostitute*
\end{itemize}
And his unbookish\textsuperscript{54} jealousy must construe\textsuperscript{55}
Poor Cassio’s smiles, gestures, and light\textsuperscript{56} behavior
Quite in the wrong.

tablett

\textbf{enter Cassio}

How do you now, lieutenant?
\textit{Cassio} The worser that you give me the addition\textsuperscript{57}
Whose want\textsuperscript{58} even kills me.
\textit{Iago} Ply\textsuperscript{59} Desdemona well, and you are\textsuperscript{60} sure on’t.
\quad Now, if this suit lay in Bianca’s power, (\textit{Iago lowers his voice})
\quad How quickly should you speed!\textsuperscript{61}
\textit{Cassio} Alas, poor caitiff!\textsuperscript{62}
\textit{Othello (aside)} Look how he laughs already.
\textit{Iago} I never knew woman love man so.
\textit{Cassio} Alas, poor rogue, I think indeed she loves me.
\textit{Othello (aside)} Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out.
\textit{Iago} Do you hear, Cassio?
\textit{Othello (aside)} Now he importunes him
\quad To tell it o’er. Go to, well said, well said.
\textit{Iago} She gives it out that you shall marry her.
\quad Do you intend it?
\textit{Cassio} Ha, ha, ha!

\textsuperscript{54} unlearnèd
\textsuperscript{55} analyze, interpret (conSTRUE)
\textsuperscript{56} trivial, unimportant, venial, of no weight
\textsuperscript{57} title, “lieutenant”
\textsuperscript{58} lack
\textsuperscript{59} apply to, work away at, solicit, importune, press
\textsuperscript{60} will be
\textsuperscript{61} succeed, prosper
\textsuperscript{62} wretch
Othello (aside) Do you triumph, Roman?63 Do you triumph?

Cassio I marry. What? A customer?64 Prythee, bear65 some charity to my wit,66 do not think it so unwholesome.67 Ha, ha, ha!

Othello (aside) So, so, so. They laugh that win.

Iago Why, the cry68 goes that you shall marry her.

Cassio Prythee, say true.

Iago I am a very villain else.

Othello (aside) Have you scored69 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.

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 the bauble,70 and falls thus about my neck.

Othello (aside) Crying, “O dear Cassio,” as it were. His gesture imports it.

Cassio So hangs, and lolls,71 and weeps upon me. So shakes and pulls me. Ha, ha, ha!

63 triumphant Roman generals were welcomed back to Rome in a great parade: triumphs
64 (1) a whore (if Cassio refers to Bianca), (2) a purchaser, client (if he refers to himself)
65 profess, pretend, maintain
66 mind, reason
67 noxious, infirm, sick, corrupted
68 rumor
69 whipped me and left marks
70 (1) plaything, pretty toy/gewgaw, (2) fool
71 droops, dangles
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.

Cassio 'Tis such another fitchew.74 Marry, a perfumed one.

enter Bianca

What do you mean by this haunting of me?

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.80 wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on't.81

Cassio How now, my sweet Bianca? How now? how now?

Othello (aside) By heaven, that should be my handkerchief.

Bianca An you'll come to supper to-night, you may; an you will not, come when you are next prepared for.
ACT 4 • SCENE I

exit Bianca

155 Iago After her, after her.
     Cassio I must, she’ll rail\textsuperscript{85} in the street else.\textsuperscript{86}
     Iago Will you sup there?
     Cassio Yes, I intend so.
     Iago Well, I may chance to see you, for I would very fain

160 speak with you.
     Cassio Prythee, 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?\textsuperscript{87}
165 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\textsuperscript{88} him, and he hath
170 given it his whore.
     Othello I would have him nine years a-killing. A fine\textsuperscript{89} 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,
175 and it hurts my hand. O, the world hath not a sweeter

\textsuperscript{85} curse
\textsuperscript{86} otherwise
\textsuperscript{87} depravity, corruption
\textsuperscript{88} it to
\textsuperscript{89} (1) superior, pure, (2) delicate, exquisite, refined
creature. She might lie by an emperor’s side, and command him tasks.

_Iago_ Nay, that’s not your way.\(^{90}\)

_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.

_Othello_ O, a thousand, a 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!

_Iago_ If you are so fond over\(^{91}\) her iniquity,\(^{92}\) give her patent\(^{93}\) to offend, for if it touch not you, it comes near nobody.

_Othello_ I will chop her into messes.\(^{94}\) Cuckold me?

_Iago_ O, ’tis foul in her.

_Othello_ With mine officer?

_Iago_ That’s fouler.

_Othello_ Get me some poison, Iago, this night. I’ll not expostulate\(^{95}\) with her, lest her body\(^{96}\) and beauty unprovide\(^{97}\) my mind again. This night, Iago.

_Iago_ Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed, even the

---

90 road, path, course
91 about
92 wickedness, unrighteous deeds
93 license, authority
94 food
95 remonstrate, reason/argue with
96 personal being, individuality
97 make unready/unequipped/unprepared
ACT 4 • SCENE I

200 bed she hath contaminated.98

_ Othello _ Good, good. The justice of it pleases. Very good.

_ Iago _ And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker.99 You shall hear more by midnight.

_ Othello _ Excellent100 good.

A TRUMPET WITHIN

What trumpet is that same?101

205 _ Iago _ I warrant something from Venice.

’Tis Lodovico, this, comes from the Duke.

See, your wife is with him.

ENTR’E LODOVICO, DESDEMONA, AND ATTENDANTS

_Lodovico _ Save you, worthy general!

_Othello _ With all my heart, sir.

210 _ Lodovico _ The Duke and senators of Venice greet you.

GIVES OTHELLO LETTERS

_Othello _ I kiss the instrument102 of their pleasures.

READS

_Desdemona _ And what’s the news, good cousin Lodovico?

_Iago _ I am very glad to see you, signior.

_Welcome to Cyprus.

215 _ Lodovico _ I thank you. How does Lieutenant Cassio?

_Iago _ Lives,103 sir.

98 sullied, defiled
99 be his undertaker = take care of him
100 exceptionally
101 that same = that
102 agent
103 he lives/is alive
Desdemona  Cousin, there’s fall’n between him, and my lord,  
        An unkind breach. But you shall make all well.

Othello  Are you sure of that?

Desdemona  My lord?

Othello  (reads aloud) “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  
        To atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.

Othello  Fire and brimstone!

Desdemona  My lord?

Othello  (to Desdemona) Are you wise?

Desdemona  What, is he angry?

Lodovico  May be the letters moved him.  
        For, as I think, they do command him home,  
        Deputing Cassio in his government.

Desdemona  Trust me, I am glad on’t.

Othello  Indeed?

Desdemona  My lord?

104 unkind breach = strange/unnatural/unpleasant rupture/separation  
105 as you will = (1) as you will not fail to do, (2) in what manner/way you wish  
106 he did not call = Othello did not address/speak to us (Lodovico wrongly explains away Othello’s remark to Desdemona)  
107 in the paper = with/reading the letters  
108 division = separation, discord, variance  
109 atone them = reconcile them (Othello and Cassio)  
110 (to be found in hell)  
111 sane/right in the head  
112 appointing, substituting  
113 office, authority, rule  
114 on’t = of it
ACT 4 • SCENE I

Othello I am glad to see you mad. 115

Desdemona Why, sweet Othello —

Othello strikes her

Othello Devil!

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, 116 Make her amends. She weeps.

Othello O devil, devil! If that the earth could teem 117 with woman’s tears, Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile. 118 Out of my sight!

Desdemona (going) I will not stay to offend you.

Lodovico Truly, an obedient lady. I do beseech your lordship, call her back.

Othello Mistress! 119

Desdemona My lord?

Othello What would you 120 with her, sir?

Lodovico Who, I, my lord?

Othello Ay; you did wish that I would make her turn. 121

Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on,

115 out of your mind
116 very much = truly excessive (“too much”)
117 bring forth, produce, swarm
118 (legends described crocodiles weeping (1) to trick men into being eaten, (2) after eating men)
119 (a frigidly distant way of addressing his wife)
120 would you = do you want
121 (1) come back, (2) change/transform/reverse positions/directions, (3) be fickle/inconstant, (4) betray, (5) infatuate/drive crazy
And turn again. And she can weep, sir, weep.
And she’s obedient. As you say, obedient.
Very obedient. (to Desdemona) Proceed you in your tears.
(to Lodovico) Concerning this, sir. (to Desdemona) O well-painted\textsuperscript{122} passion.
(to Lodovico) I am commanded\textsuperscript{123} home. (to Desdemona) Get you away;
I’ll send for you anon. (to Lodovico) Sir, I obey the mandate,\textsuperscript{124} And will return to Venice. (to Desdemona) 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\textsuperscript{125}

**exit Othello**

*Lodovico* Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Call all in all\textsuperscript{126} sufficient? Is this the nature
Whom passion could not shake? Whose solid virtue
The shot\textsuperscript{127} of accident nor dart\textsuperscript{128} of chance
Could neither graze\textsuperscript{129} nor pierce?

*Iago* He is much changed.

\textsuperscript{122} feigned, pretended, artificial
\textsuperscript{123} ordered
\textsuperscript{124} command
\textsuperscript{125} (Iago’s words at 3.3.000: “as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys”)
\textsuperscript{126} all in all = completely, in every respect
\textsuperscript{127} bullets, shells
\textsuperscript{128} spears, javelins
\textsuperscript{129} touch
Lodovico Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain?
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!

What, strike his wife!
Iago ’Faith, that was not so well. Yet would I knew
That stroke would prove the worst.

Is it his use?
Or did the letters work upon his blood,
And new create this fault?

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
That I may save my speech. Do but go after,
And mark how he continues.

I am sorry that I am deceived in him.

EXEUNT

130 sound
131 deficient
132 (?) (this speech is in outline comprehensible, but in detail obscure)
133 in faith
134 would I knew = I wish I knew
135 habit, custom
136 (1) must, (2) will
137 make known, mark
138 in such a way
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.
Othello What? Did they never whisper?
Emilia Never, my lord.
Othello Nor send you out o’ the way?
Emilia Never.
Othello To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, ¹ nor nothing?
Emilia Never, my lord.
Othello That’s strange.
Emilia I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,
    Lay down² my soul at stake.³ If you think other,⁴
    Remove⁵ your thought. It doth abuse your bosom.
    If any wretch have put this in your head,
    Let heaven requite⁶ it with the serpent’s curse!
    If she be not honest, chaste, and true,
    There’s no man happy. The purest of their wives
    Is foul as slander.

¹ (worn to keep off the sun, protect the face from dust)
² durst . . . lay down = dare bet
³ at stake = at risk (“as a bet”)
⁴ otherwise, differently
⁵ withdraw, abandon, dismiss, change
⁶ repay, reward, revenge
**Othello**  
Bid her come hither. Go.

**exit Emilia**

She says enough. Yet she’s\(^7\) a simple bawd\(^8\)  
That cannot say as much. This\(^9\) is a subtle\(^10\) whore,  
A closet\(^11\) lock and key of villainous secrets.  
And yet she’ll kneel and pray. I have seen her do’t.

**enter Emilia with Desdemona**

**Desdemona**  My lord, what is your will?  
**Othello**  Pray, chuck, come hither.  
**Desdemona**  What is your pleasure?  
**Othello**  Let me see your eyes.  

Look in my face.

**Desdemona**  What horrible fancy’s\(^12\) this?  
**Othello**  *(to Emilia)* Some\(^13\) of your function,\(^14\) mistress.  
Leave procreants\(^15\) alone and shut the door.  
Cough, or cry hem, if anybody come.

**exit Emilia**

Your mystery,\(^16\) your mystery. Nay, dispatch.\(^17\)  
**Desdemona**  Upon my knees, what doth your speech import?

\(^{7}\) she’s = she (any woman) would be  
\(^{8}\) simple bawd = foolish/stupid procurer (female for “pimp”)  
\(^{9}\) elusive, expert, clever  
\(^{10}\) hidden/secret place  
\(^{12}\) fancy’s = whim is  
\(^{13}\) give me/let me have  
\(^{14}\) your function = the business of your trade (as a bawd)  
\(^{15}\) those who make babies/have sex  
\(^{16}\) hidden/secret matter  
\(^{17}\) hurry, quick
I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Othello} \hspace{1em} Why, what art thou?
\textit{Desdemona} Your wife, my lord. Your true and loyal wife.
\textit{Othello} \hspace{1em} Come, swear it. Damn thyself,
Lest being like one of heaven,\textsuperscript{19} the devils themselves
Should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double damned.
Swear thou art honest.

\textit{Desdemona} \hspace{1em} Heaven doth truly know it.
\textit{Othello} \hspace{1em} Heaven truly knows that thou art false\textsuperscript{20} as hell.
\textit{Desdemona} To whom, my lord? With whom? How am I false?
\textit{Othello} \hspace{1em} Ah Desdemona, away, away, away!
\textit{Desdemona} Alas the heavy day. Why do you weep?
\hspace{1em} Am I the motive\textsuperscript{21} of these tears, my lord?
\hspace{1em} If haply you my father do suspect
\hspace{1em} An instrument of this your calling back,
\hspace{1em} Lay not your blame on me. If you have lost him,
\hspace{1em} Why, I have lost him too.
\textit{Othello} \hspace{1em} Had it pleased heaven
To try\textsuperscript{22} me with affliction, had they rained
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steeped me in poverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity me and my utmost\textsuperscript{23} hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience. But alas, to make me

\textsuperscript{18} (“but not the words”: from the Quarto)
\textsuperscript{19} being like one of heaven = looking as you do like an angel
\textsuperscript{20} treacherous
\textsuperscript{21} cause, reason
\textsuperscript{22} test
\textsuperscript{23} final
A fixèd\textsuperscript{24} figure for the time, for scorn

55  To point his slow unmoving finger at!

Yet could I bear that too, well, very well.

But there where I have garnered\textsuperscript{25} up my heart,

Where either I must live, or bear\textsuperscript{26} no life,

The fountain\textsuperscript{27} from the which my current\textsuperscript{28} runs,

Or else dries up – to be discarded\textsuperscript{29} thence!

Or keep\textsuperscript{30} it as a cistern\textsuperscript{31} for foul toads

To knot and gender\textsuperscript{32} in. Turn thy complexion there,

Patience,\textsuperscript{33} thou young and rose-lipp’ed cherubin.\textsuperscript{34}

Ay, here\textsuperscript{35} look grim as hell.

65  \textit{Desdemona} I hope my noble lord esteems\textsuperscript{36} me honest.

\textit{Othello} O ay, as summer flies are in the shambles,\textsuperscript{37}

That quicken even with blowing.\textsuperscript{38} O thou weed,\textsuperscript{39}

Who art so lovely fair, and smell’st so sweet

That the sense\textsuperscript{40} aches at thee, would thou hadst ne’er been

born!

\textsuperscript{24} lasting, permanent
\textsuperscript{25} stored, deposited
\textsuperscript{26} have, own
\textsuperscript{27} spring, source, well
\textsuperscript{28} flowing stream (“life”)
\textsuperscript{29} rejected, cast off
\textsuperscript{30} or keep = or else to maintain/preserve
\textsuperscript{31} water tank/reservoir/pond
\textsuperscript{32} knot and gender = entangle and beget/copulate
\textsuperscript{33} turn thy complexion there, Patience = look at that (complexion =

countenance, face), Patience
\textsuperscript{34} (a description of Patience)
\textsuperscript{35} at Desdemona
\textsuperscript{36} thinks
\textsuperscript{37} meat stall/market
\textsuperscript{38} quicken even with blowing = are conceived/given life the moment the male

fly deposits semen in the female (oviposition = blowing)
\textsuperscript{39} wild/rank plant (the blossoming of plants also = blowing)
\textsuperscript{40} the sense = perception
Desdemona  Alas, what ignorant\(^41\) sin have I committed?

Othello  Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
Made to write “whore” upon? What committed,
Committed? O thou public commoner!\(^42\)
I should\(^43\) make very forges of my cheeks,
That would to cinders burn up modesty,
Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed?
Heaven stops\(^44\) the nose at it, and the moon winks.
The bawdy wind, that kisses all it meets,
Is hushed within the hollow mine\(^45\) of earth
And will not hear it. What committed?
Impudent strumpet!

Desdemona  By heaven, you do me wrong.

Othello  Are not you a strumpet?

Desdemona  No, as I am\(^46\) a Christian.
If to preserve this vessel\(^47\) 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.

Othello  Is’t possible?

Desdemona  O, heaven forgive us!

Othello  I cry you mercy\(^48\) then.
I took you for that cunning whore of Venice

\(^{41}\) unknowing, unconscious, innocent
\(^{42}\) common whore
\(^{43}\) would
\(^{44}\) plugs, blocks/stuffs up
\(^{45}\) subterranean cavity
\(^{46}\) as I am = in the name of my being
\(^{47}\) her body
\(^{48}\) cry you mercy = beg your pardon
That married with Othello. (calling to Emilia) You, mistress, That have the office opposite \(^{49}\) to Saint Peter, And keeps \(^{50}\) the gate of hell \(^{51}\)

**enter Emilia**

You, you. Ay, you! We have done our course. \(^{52}\) There’s money for your pains. I pray you turn the key, and keep our counsel.

**exit Othello**

*Emilia* Alas, what does this gentleman conceive? \(^{53}\) How do you, madam? How do you, my good lady?

*Desdemona* Faith, half asleep. \(^{54}\)

*Emilia* Good madam, what’s the matter with my lord?

*Desdemona* With who? \(^{55}\)

*Emilia* Why, with my lord, madam.

*Desdemona* Who is thy lord?

*Emilia* He that is yours, sweet lady.

*Desdemona* I have none. Do not talk to me, Emilia.

I cannot weep, nor answer have I none

But what should go by water. \(^{56}\) Prythee, tonight

Lay on my bed my wedding sheets – remember –

---

\(^{49}\) the office opposite = the employment/function/task directly opposed/contrary to

\(^{50}\) take care of, guard, watch over

\(^{51}\) (as opposed to St. Peter, who is the gatekeeper of heaven)

\(^{52}\) bout, gallop (“what we were supposed to have done”)

\(^{53}\) does this gentleman conceive = what is this man thinking/imagining

\(^{54}\) dormant, numb, stunned

\(^{55}\) (in spoken English, the “who”/“whom” controversy was won, at least 300 years ago, by “who”)

\(^{56}\) go by water = be transmitted by tears
And call thy husband hither.

*Emilia* Here’s a change indeed.

**exit Emilia**

*Desdemona* 'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet.

How have I been behaved, that he might stick

The small’st opinion on my least misuse?

**enter Emilia and Iago**

*Iago* What is your pleasure, madam? How is’t with you?

*Desdemona* I cannot tell. Those that do teach young babes

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,

As true hearts cannot bear.

*Desdemona* Am I that name, Iago?

*Iago* What name, fair lady?

*Desdemona* Such as she says my lord did say I was.

*Emilia* He called her whore. A beggar in his drink,

Could not have laid such terms upon his callet.

*Iago* Why did he so?

---

57 stick the small’st opinion = fix/fasten/attach the most minor/trivial judgment/belief/estimate

58 wrong/wicked conduct

59 inexperienced (“unaccustomed”)

60 used the word “whore” against

61 contempt, scorn, disdain

62 in his drink = when drunk

63 strumpet, lewd woman
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,
   To be called whore? Would it not make one weep?
Desdemona It is my wretchèd fortune.
Iago Beshrew him for’t.
   How comes this trick\(^{64}\) upon him?
Desdemona Nay, heaven doth know.\(^{65}\)
Emilia I will be hanged, if some eternal\(^{66}\) villain,
   Some busy and insinuating\(^{67}\) rogue,
   Some cogging, cozening\(^{68}\) slave, to get some office,\(^{69}\)
   Have not devised this slander. I will 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\(^{70}\) pardon him, and hell gnaw his bones!
   Why should he call her whore? Who keeps her company?
   What place? What time? What form?\(^{71}\) What likelihood?
   The Moor’s abused by some most villainous knave,
   Some base notorious knave, some scurvy\(^{72}\) fellow.
O heaven, that such companions thou’dst unfold,\(^{73}\)

\(^{64}\) crafty/ fraudulent/sham act
\(^{65}\) heaven knows; we don’t
\(^{66}\) (1) infinite, endless, perpetual, (2) infinitely disgusting
\(^{67}\) wily, wheedling, artful
\(^{68}\) cogging, cozening = cheating, fraudulent
\(^{69}\) (1) attention (2) post
\(^{70}\) hangman’s rope
\(^{71}\) manner, way
\(^{72}\) shabby, worthless, contemptible
\(^{73}\) thou’dst unfold = you (heaven) would disclose/make clear/lay open to view
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.74

_Emilia_ O, fie upon them!75 Some such squire76 he was
That turned your wit the seamy side77 without,
And made you to suspect me with the Moor.

_Iago_ You are a fool. Go to.

_Desdemona_ Alas, 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.
If e’er my will did trespass78 ’gainst his love,
Either in discourse79 of thought or actual deed,
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them80 in any other form,81
Or that I do not yet,82 and ever did
And ever will – though he do shake me off
To beggarly83 divorcement – love him dearly,
Comfort forswear me!84 Unkindness may do much,
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love. I cannot say whore.
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 humor.
      The business of the state does him offense,
      And he does chide with you.

Desdemona  If ’twere no other.

Iago  ’Tis but so, I warrant.

TRUMPETS WITHIN

Hark, how these instruments summon to supper.

The messengers of Venice stay the meat,
Go in, and weep not. All things shall be well.

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?

85 destroy, ruin, nullify
86 whole bulk
87 (this line from the Quarto)
88 if ’twere no other = if only it might be that, and nothing more
89 (?) what a great deal of noise they make
90 from
91 are coming to
92 meal, repast, dinner
93 go in = go into dinner (“join the company”)
94 to
Roderigo  Every day thou daffest me\(^{95}\) with some device, Iago, and rather, as it seems to me now, keep’st from me all conveniency\(^{96}\) than suppliest me with the least advantage\(^{97}\) of hope. I will indeed no longer endure it, nor am I yet persuaded to put up\(^{98}\) in peace what already I have foolishly suffered.\(^{99}\)

Iago  Will you hear me, Roderigo?

Roderigo  I have heard too much. And your words and performances\(^{100}\) are no kin together.\(^{101}\)

Iago  You charge\(^{102}\) me most unjustly.

Roderigo  With naught but truth. I have wasted\(^{103}\) myself out of my means.\(^{104}\) The jewels you have had from me to deliver to Desdemona would half\(^{105}\) have corrupted\(^{106}\) a votarist.\(^{107}\) You have told me she hath received them, and returned me\(^{108}\) expectations and comforts of sudden respect\(^{109}\) and acquaintance,\(^{110}\) but I find none.

Iago  Well, go to. Very well.

Roderigo  Very well, go to! I cannot go to, man, nor ’tis not very

---

95 daffest me = put me off
96 opportunity
97 circumstance, position, chance
98 up with
99 endured, submitted to
100 actions, deeds
101 no kin together = not from the same family
102 accuse
103 consumed, exhausted
104 resources
105 only a half of them
106 defiled, perverted
107 devotee (“nun”)
108 returned me = given me back
109 sudden respect = speedy regard/favor
110 intimacy
well. Nay, I think ’tis very scurvy,\(^{111}\) and begin to find myself fobbed\(^ {112}\) in it.

195  \(Iago\) 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 suit and repent my unlawful solicitation. If not, assure yourself I will seek satisfaction\(^ {113}\) of you.

200  \(Iago\) You have said\(^ {114}\) now.

\(Roderigo\) Ay, and said nothing but what I protest\(^ {115}\) intendment of doing.

\(Iago\) Why, now I see there’s mettle\(^ {116}\) 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.\(^ {117}\) But yet I protest I have dealt most directly in thy affair.

\(Roderigo\) It hath not appeared.\(^ {118}\)

\(Iago\) I grant indeed it hath not appeared, and your suspicion is not without wit and judgment. But, Roderigo, if thou hast that in thee indeed, which I have greater reason to believe now than ever — I mean purpose, courage, and valor\(^ {119}\) — this night show it. If thou the next night following enjoy\(^ {120}\) not Desdemona, take me from this world with treachery and

---

111 shabby, contemptible
112 cheated
113 (1) compensation, amends, (2) a duel of honor
114 you have said = you’re finished
115 declare most formally/solemnly
116 spirit, vigor, courage
117 complaint
118 shown itself, become apparent/visible
119 worth, manliness, boldness
120 possess, have sexual intercourse with
devise engines\textsuperscript{121} for my life.

\textit{Roderigo} Well, what is it? Is it within reason and compass?\textsuperscript{122}

\textit{Iago} Sir, there is especial commission\textsuperscript{123} come from Venice to depute\textsuperscript{124} Cassio in Othello’s place.

\textit{Roderigo} Is that true? Why then Othello and Desdemona return again to Venice.

\textit{Iago} O no. He goes into Mauritania,\textsuperscript{125} and taketh away with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be lingered\textsuperscript{126} here by some accident. Wherein none can be so determinate\textsuperscript{127} as the removing of Cassio.

\textit{Roderigo} How do you mean removing of him?

\textit{Iago} Why, by making him uncapable of Othello’s place. Knocking out his brains.

\textit{Roderigo} And that you would have me to do?

\textit{Iago} Ay, if you dare do yourself a profit and a right.\textsuperscript{128} He sups tonight with a harlotry,\textsuperscript{129} and thither will I go to him. He knows not yet of his honorable\textsuperscript{130} fortune. If you will watch his going thence – which I will fashion\textsuperscript{131} to fall out\textsuperscript{132} between twelve and one – you may take\textsuperscript{133} him at

\textsuperscript{121} plots
\textsuperscript{122} reach
\textsuperscript{123} order, instruction, command
\textsuperscript{124} appoint
\textsuperscript{125} (the population of Mauritania is largely Moorish)
\textsuperscript{126} protracted, continued
\textsuperscript{127} definitive, decisive
\textsuperscript{128} that which is proper/a duty
\textsuperscript{129} harlot
\textsuperscript{130} distinguished
\textsuperscript{131} shape, contrive
\textsuperscript{132} fall out = occur
\textsuperscript{133} lay hold of, strike, catch by surprise
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.

240 Roderigo I will hear further reason for this.

Iago And you shall be satisfied.

exeunt
ACT 4 • SCENE 3

SCENE 3
The Citadel

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 honor 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.¹ 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 gentler² than he did.
Desdemona He says he will return incontinent.³
He hath commanded me to go to bed,
And bade me to dismiss you.
Emilia Dismiss me?
Desdemona It was his bidding.⁴ Therefore, good Emilia,
Give me my nightly wearing,⁵ and adieu.
We must not now displease him.
Emilia I would⁶ you had never seen him.

¹ without delay, directly
² quieter, softer, milder
³ straightway, without delay
⁴ order, command
⁵ clothing
⁶ wish
Desdemona So would not I. My love doth so approve him,
That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns –
Prythee, unpin me\(^7\) – have grace and favor in them.

Emilia I have laid those sheets you bade me on the bed.

Desdemona All’s one.\(^8\) Good Father, how foolish are our minds!
If I do die before thee, prythee, shroud me
In one of those same sheets.

Emilia Come, come. You talk.\(^9\)

Desdemona My mother had a maid\(^10\) called Barbary,\(^11\)
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\(^12\) her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song tonight
Will not go from my mind. I have much to do\(^13\)
But to go hang\(^14\) my head all at one side\(^15\)
And sing it like poor Barbary. Prythee dispatch.

Emilia Shall I go fetch your nightgown?

Desdemona No, unpin me here.

This Lodovico\(^16\) is a proper man.

Emilia A very handsome man.

Desdemona He speaks well.

Emilia I know a lady in Venice would have walked barefoot

\(^7\) unpin me = hair? dress?
\(^8\) all’s one = it’s all one (“all right”)
\(^9\) speak trivially, prate
\(^10\) servant (a word also meaning “slave,” as in Latin servus)
\(^11\) (northern coast of Africa: was the maid a Moor? was she black?)
\(^12\) represented, portrayed
\(^13\) I have much to do = it is hard to keep myself from
\(^14\) bend, droop (in sadness)
\(^15\) all at one side = all the way down
\(^16\) (Lodovico is her cousin; some editors assign this line to Emilia)
to Palestine for a touch of his nether\textsuperscript{17} lip.

\textit{Desdemona (singing)}

\begin{quote}
The poor soul sat sighing, by a sycamore tree, \hspace{1em} 40
Sing all a green willow.\textsuperscript{18}
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee, \hspace{1em} 45
Sing willow, willow, willow.
The fresh\textsuperscript{19} streams ran by her, and murmured her moans, \hspace{1em} 50
Sing willow, willow, willow.
Her salt tears fell from her, and softened the stones, \hspace{1em}
Sing willow, willow, willow.
\end{quote}

\textit{(to Emilia)} Lay by\textsuperscript{20} these.

\begin{quote}
Sing willow, willow – \hspace{1em} 55
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Prythee, hie\textsuperscript{21} thee. He’ll come anon.\textsuperscript{22}
Sing all a green willow must be my garland. \hspace{1em} 60
Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve –
Nay, that’s not next. Hark! who is’t that knocks?
\end{quote}

\textit{Emilia} It’s the wind.

\textit{Desdemona (singing)}

\begin{quote}
I call’d my love false love. But what said he then? \hspace{1em} 65
Sing willow, willow, willow.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} lower
\textsuperscript{18} green willow: symbolic of grief for loss of a lover or the failure of love to be reciprocated
\textsuperscript{19} not saltwater
\textsuperscript{20} put away, store
\textsuperscript{21} hurry
\textsuperscript{22} immediately
If I court more women, you’ll couch with more men.

So get thee gone, good night. Mine eyes do itch.
Doth 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.

*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’ the dark.

*Desdemona* Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

*Emilia* The world’s a huge thing.

It is a great price for a small vice.

*Desdemona* In troth, I think thou wouldst not.

*Emilia* In troth, I think I should, and undo’t when I had

done. 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 petty exhibition. But for all the whole world – why, who would not make her husband a cuckold to make

---

23 more
24 sleep
25 foretell, predict
26 deceive, cheat
27 undo’t = annul, cancel (“disregard”)
28 made of two separable halves
29 measures of lawn = a good deal of fine linen
30 gift, present
him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for’t.

Desdemona Beshrew me, if I would do such a wrong for the whole world.

Emilia Why, the wrong is but a wrong i’ the world. And having the world for your labor, ’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 the vantage as would store 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 jealously, 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 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?

31 risk
32 having the world for your labor = earning/ winning the world for the work you’ve done
33 your own world = the world you own/ possess
34 could
35 to the vantage = more
36 stock, supply
37 diminish, limit
38 things that irritate, distress, harass
39 we have some grace = (?) we have gotten ourselves some illicit favor? made it necessary that we be divinely forgiven?
I think it is. And doth affection\textsuperscript{40} 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\textsuperscript{41} use us well. Else let them know
The ills\textsuperscript{42} we do their ills instruct\textsuperscript{43} us so.

\textit{Desdemona} Goodnight, goodnight. Heaven me such usage\textsuperscript{44}
send,
Not to pick bad from bad,\textsuperscript{45} but by\textsuperscript{46} bad mend.\textsuperscript{47}

\textit{Exeunt}
Act 5

Scene 1
A street

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.

Roderigo Be near at hand, I may miscarry in't.

Iago Here, at thy hand. Be bold, and take thy stand.

Iago steps aside

1 framework projecting from a shop front
2 carry
3 pointed, two-edged sword
4 put it home = thrust it as far in as it will go
5 ruins
6 RESOLUseeON
7 be unsuccessful
8 I am/will be here
9 ambush position
Roderigo  I have no great devotion\textsuperscript{10} to the deed,
   And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons.
   'Tis but a man gone. Forth, my sword. He dies.

Iago  \((\text{aside})\) I have rubbed this young\textsuperscript{11}quat almost to the
   sense,\textsuperscript{12} 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,\textsuperscript{13}
   He calls me to a restitution large
   Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from\textsuperscript{14} him,
   As gifts to Desdemona.
   It must not be. If Cassio do remain,
   He hath a daily beauty\textsuperscript{15} in his life
   That makes me ugly. And besides, the Moor
   May unfold me to him. There stand I in much peril.
   No, he must die. But, so, I hear him coming.

\textbf{enter Cassio}

Roderigo  I know his gait, 'tis he. Villain, thou diest!

\textbf{thrusts at Cassio}

Cassio  That thrust had been mine enemy\textsuperscript{16} indeed,
   But that my coat\textsuperscript{17} is better than thou know'st.
   I will make proof of thine.

\textsuperscript{10} dedication, enthusiasm
\textsuperscript{11} pimple, boil
\textsuperscript{12} quick, flesh
\textsuperscript{13} if Roderigo lives
\textsuperscript{14} bobbed from = fished/cheated out of
\textsuperscript{15} daily beauty = habitual graciousness
\textsuperscript{16} death
\textsuperscript{17} a mail-coat?
Cassio draws, and wounds Roderigo

Roderigo

O, I am slain!

Iago from behind stabs Cassio in the leg, and exits

Cassio

I am maimed forever. Help, ho! Murder! Murder!

enter Othello to the side

Othello

The voice of Cassio, Iago keeps his word.

Roderigo

O, villain that I am!

Othello

It is even so.

Cassio

O, help, ho! Light, a surgeon!

Othello

’Tis he. O brave Iago, honest and just,
That hast such noble sense of thy friend’s wrong,
Thou teachest me. Minion, your dear lies dead,
And your unbless’d 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 at a distance

Cassio


Gratiano

’Tis some mischance, the cry is very direful.
Cassio    O help!

Lodovico  Hark!

Roderigo  O wretched villain!

Lodovico  Two or three groan. It is a heavy night,
          These may be counterfeits. Let’s think’ it unsafe
          To come into the cry without more help.

Roderigo  Nobody come? Then shall I bleed to death.

Lodovico  Hark!

Enter Iago

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 not you hear a cry?

Cassio   Here, here! For heaven’s sake, help me!

Iago     What’s the matter?

Gratiano  This is Othello’s ancient, as I take it.

Lodovico  The same indeed, a very valiant fellow.

Iago     (holding up his lantern) What are you here that cry so
          grievously?

Cassio   Iago? O, I am spoiled, undone by villains!

28 two or three = there are two or three who
29 overcast, gloomy, dark
30 pretended, sham
31 think’ it = consider it
32 come into = go to
33 shall I = I must
34 nightshirt
35 what’s the matter = what’s going on
36 take it = think
37 bold, stout-hearted, worthy
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!
Cassio   That’s one of them.
Iago    (to Roderigo) O murderous slave! O villain!

IAGO STABS RODERIGO

Roderigo O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!
Iago    Kill men i’ the dark! Where be these bloody thieves?
        How silent is this town! Ho, murder, murder!
        (to Gratiano and Lodovico) What may you be? Are you of good
or evil?
Lodovico As you shall prove us, praise\textsuperscript{38} us.
Iago    Signior Lodovico?
Lodovico He, sir.
Iago    I cry you mercy. Here’s Cassio hurt by villains.
Gratiano Cassio?
Iago    How is’t, brother?
Cassio   My leg is cut in two.
Iago    Marry, heaven forbid!
        Light,\textsuperscript{39} gentlemen, I’ll bind it with my shirt.

ENTER BIANCA

\textsuperscript{38} appraise, set a price/value on
\textsuperscript{39} give me light, hold the light up for me
What is the matter, ho? who is’t that cried?

Who is’t that cried!

O my dear Cassio,

My sweet Cassio! O Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

O notable strumpet! Cassio, may you suspect

Who they should be that have thus mangled you?

Cassio

No.

I am sorry to find you thus. I have been to seek you.

Lend me a garter. So. O for a chair,

To bear him easily hence!

Alas, he faints! O Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash in this injury.

To be a party in this injury.

Patience awhile, good Cassio. – Come, come,

Lend me a light. – (looking at Roderigo) Know we this face or no?

Alas, my friend and my dear countryman


What, of Venice?

Even he, sir. Did you know him?

Know him? Ay.

Signior Gratiano? I cry you gentle pardon.

These bloody accidents must excuse my manners
That so neglected you.

Gratiano I am glad to see you.

Iago How do you, Cassio? (calling) O, a chair, a chair!

Gratiano Roderigo?

Iago He, he, ’tis he. – O, that’s well said. The chair.

A chair is brought in

Some good man bear him carefully from hence,
I’ll fetch the general’s surgeon. (to Bianca) For you, mistress, Save you your labor. (to Cassio) 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.


Cassio and Roderigo are carried out

Stay you, good gentlemen. – Look you pale, mistress? – 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.

48 (?) assayed? (“done”)
49 as for
50 save you = spare you
51 exertion, trouble
52 night air was “vaporous” and dangerous to the health
53 terrified appearance
54 in astonishment?
55 were out of use = are not being used
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 'scap'd.
   He's almost slain, and Roderigo quite dead.

Emilia Alas, good gentleman. Alas, good Cassio.

Iago This is the fruits of whoring. Prythee, 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.

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? Fie upon thee!

Iago Kind gentlemen, let's go see poor Cassio dressed.
   (to Bianca) Come, mistress, you must tell's another tale.

Emilia, run you to the Citadel,
   And tell my lord and lady what hath happed.
   (to Gratiano, Lodovico) Will you go on afore? (aside) This is the night
   That either makes me or fordoes me quite.

Exeunt

56 for that
57 taken care of
58 tell us
59 another tale = a different sequence of events/narrative
60 sets me up, brings me success/fortune
61 destroys, ruins
Othello  It is the cause,¹ it is the cause, my soul.
Let me not name it to you, you chaste² stars,
It is the cause. Yet I’ll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers, than snow,³
And smooth as monumental⁴ alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she’ll betray more men.
Put out the light,⁵ and then put out the light.⁶
(to candle) If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,⁷
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me. (to Desdemona) But once put out
thy light,
Thou cunning’st pattern⁸ of excelling nature,⁹
I know not where is that Promethean¹⁰ heat
That can thy light relume.¹¹ When I have plucked thy rose,
I cannot give it vital¹² growth again,

¹ reason/ground for action (the “offense”)
² virtuous, innocent
³ whiter skin of hers, than snow = skin of hers, whiter than snow
⁴ tomb/funeral/memorial
⁵ the candle
⁶ of her life
⁷ servant, attendant
⁸ cunning’st pattern = most ingenious model
⁹ excelling nature = (1) a superior kind/sort, (2) surpassing/great Nature
¹⁰ Prometheus = the fire giver
¹¹ rekindle, relight
¹² living
It must needs wither. I'll smell thee on the tree.

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 that's the last.
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly,
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, Desdemona?
Desdemona Ay, my lord.
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?

13 necessarily, of necessity
14 (roses were said to grow on plants/bushes/shrubs/trees: “tree” included single-stemmed bushes)
15 delicately/deliciously fragrant
16 a female goddess, holding either balanced scales or a sword, for cutting the thread of life (Justitia)
17 one more = one more kiss
18 doomed, condemned by fate
19 divine, like the punishment/revenge of God
20 remember, recollect
21 offense, sin
22 unreconciled as yet = not yet absolved/set right
23 heaven’s grace/mercy
24 beg, seek (“pray”)
Othello
Well, do it, and be brief, I will walk by.25
I would not kill thy unprepared spirit,
No, heaven forfend,26 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,27 I hope you will not kill me.
Othello Humph.

Desdemona And yet I fear you. For you are fatal then
When28 your eyes roll so. Why I should fear I know not,
Since guiltiness I know not. But yet I feel I fear.

Othello Think on29 thy sins.
Desdemona They are loves I bear to you.30
Othello Ay, and for that thou diest.

Desdemona That death’s unnatural that kills for loving.31
Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame.32
These are portents,33 But yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point on34 me.

25 nearby, close by
26 forbid, prevent
27 say so = speak like that
28 then when = when
29 about
30 (her love should be directed to God; to the extent that it is not, she sins
against God by loving Othello)
31 ("it is against Nature to kill what you love")
32 very frame = (1) entire body, (2) actual body (very = an intensifier)
33 omens, signs
34 at
Othello: Peace, and be still.\(^{35}\)
Desdemona: I will so. What’s the matter?
Othello: That handkerchief which I so loved and gave thee,
Thou gav’st to Cassio.
Desdemona: No, by my life and soul!
Send for the man, and ask him.
Othello: Sweet soul, take heed,
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy death-bed.
Desdemona: Ay, but not yet to die.
Othello: Presently.
Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin.
For to deny each article\(^{36}\) with oath\(^{37}\)
Cannot remove nor choke\(^{38}\) the strong conception\(^{39}\)
That I do groan withal.\(^{40}\) Thou art to die.
Desdemona: O heaven have mercy on me!
Othello: I say, amen.
Desdemona: And have you\(^{41}\) mercy too. I never did
Offend you in my life, never loved Cassio
But with such general warranty\(^{42}\) of heaven
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

---

\(^{35}\) peace, and be still = be silent, and stay silent
\(^{36}\) charge, accusation, indictment
\(^{37}\) an oath
\(^{38}\) smother, stop, kill
\(^{39}\) idea, opinion
\(^{40}\) with, from
\(^{41}\) have you = you have
\(^{42}\) authorization
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice.
I saw the handkerchief.

Desdemona He found it then.
I never gave it him. Send for him hither.
Let him confess a truth.

Othello He hath confessed.

Desdemona What, my lord?

Othello That he hath used thee.

Desdemona How? Unlawfully?

Othello Ay.

Desdemona He will not say so.

Othello No, his mouth is stopped.

Honest Iago hath ta’en order for’t.

Desdemona O, my fear interprets! What, is he dead?

Othello Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge

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 (trying to rise) O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!

Othello Down, strumpet!

Desdemona Kill me tomorrow, let me live tonight!

Othello Nay, if you strive —

Desdemona But half an hour!

43 had sexual intercourse with
44 ta’en order = undertaken the arrangement/accomplishment
45 explains it to me
46 relish, desire, disposition
47 is betrayed = has been treacherously brought down
48 destroyed, ruined
49 (vehement, indignant exclamation)
50 struggle, fight
Othello Being done,\(^{51}\) there is no pause.

Desdemona But while I say one prayer!

Othello It is too late.

HE SMOTHERS HER

Emilia \((at the door)\) My lord, my lord? What, ho? My lord, my lord.

Othello What noise is this? \((to Desdemona)\) Not dead? Not yet quite dead?

I that am cruel\(^{52}\) am yet merciful,
I would not have thee linger in thy pain.
\((smothering her again)\) So, so.

Emilia What ho? My lord, my lord?

Othello Who’s there?

Emilia O good my lord, I would speak a word with you.

Othello \((to Emilia)\) Yes. \((to himself)\) ’Tis Emilia. \((to Emilia)\) By and by. \((looking at Desdemona)\) She’s dead.
’Tis like she\(^{53}\) comes to speak of Cassio’s death.
The noise\(^{54}\) was high. – Ha, no more moving?
Still as the grave. – Shall she\(^{55}\) come in? Were’t good? –

I think she\(^{56}\) 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!\(^{57}\) O heavy hour!
Methinks it\(^{58}\) should be now a huge eclipse

---

51 performed, executed, accomplished
52 CRUel
53 ’tis like she = it’s likely she (Emilia)
54 outcry, clamor
55 shall she = should Emilia
56 Desdemona
57 unbearable, unendurable
58 there
Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe
Should yawn at alteration.\(^{59}\)

_Emilia_ 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.\(^{60}\)

(to _Desdemona_) Where art thou?\(^{61}\) What’s the matter\(^{62}\) with thee now?

**H E U N L O C K S T H E D O O R**

**E N T E R E M I L I A**

_Emilia_ O my good lord, yonder’s foul murders done.
_Othello_ What? Now?
_Emilia_ But now, my lord.
_Othello_ It is the very error\(^{63}\) of the moon,
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.
_Othello_ Not Cassio killed? Then murder’s out of tune,
    And sweet revenge grows harsh.
_Desdemona_ O, falsely, falsely murdered!
_Emilia_ Alas, what cry is that?

\(^{59}\) yawn at alteration = break out in chasms at the/this change
\(^{60}\) curtains draw = close the bed curtains
\(^{61}\) in heaven or in hell?
\(^{62}\) the matter = going on
\(^{63}\) wandering, roaming
ACT 5 • SCENE 2

Othello

That? What?

Emilia

Out and alas, that was my lady's voice.

Emilia opens 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.

Comment 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.

'Twas I that killed her.

Emilia

O the more angel she,
And you the blacker64 devil!

Othello

She turned to folly.65 And she was a whore.

Emilia

Thou dost belie66 her, and thou art a devil.

Othello

She was false as water.67

Emilia

Thou art rash68 as fire, to say

That she was false. O she was heavenly true.

64 more foul/soiled
65 sin, wickedness, lewdness
66 slander
67 (water betrays those who try to stand or walk on it; it is always in flux)
68 reckless
Othello  Cassio did top\textsuperscript{69} her. Ask thy husband else.\textsuperscript{70}

O I were damned beneath all depth in hell,
But that I did proceed upon just grounds
To this extremity.\textsuperscript{71} Thy husband knew it all.

Emilia  My husband?
Othello  Thy husband.

Emilia  That she was false to
wedlock?\textsuperscript{72}

Othello  Ay, with Cassio. Nay, had she been true,
If heaven would make me such another world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,\textsuperscript{73}
I’d not have sold her for it.

Emilia  My husband?
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,\textsuperscript{74} woman? I say thy husband.

Emilia  O mistress, villainy hath made mocks with love.

My husband say 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\textsuperscript{75} soul
Rrot half a grain\textsuperscript{76} a day! He lies to th’heart,

\textsuperscript{69} have sexual intercourse with
\textsuperscript{70} if she did not
\textsuperscript{71} (1) final penalty, (2) severe/rigorous measure
\textsuperscript{72} her marriage vow
\textsuperscript{73} green-colored gem (topaz, zircon, etc.)
\textsuperscript{74} repetition
\textsuperscript{75} wicked, villainous, destructive
\textsuperscript{76} a small piece/bit
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.77

Othello  Ha?

Emilia  Do thy worst.

This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven
Than thou wast worthy78 her.

Othello  Peace, you were best.79

Emilia  Thou hast not half that power to do me harm
As I have80 to be hurt. O gull,81 O dolt,82
As ignorant as dirt! Thou hast done a deed –

Othello reaches to his sword

I care not83 for thy sword, I'll make thee known,
Though I lost twenty lives. Help, help, ho, help!

The Moor hath killed my mistress! Murder, murder!

enter Montano, Gratiano, and Iago

Montano  What is the matter? How now, general?

Emilia  O, are84 you come, Iago? You have done well,
That men must lay their murders on your neck.85

Gratiano  What is the matter?

Emilia  (to Iago) Disprove86 this villain, if thou be’st a man.

He says thou told’st him that his wife was false.

77 marriage to Othello
78 worthy of
79 you were best = it would be the most advantageous/desirable thing for you
80 have the endurance
81 dupe, simpleton, fool
82 blockhead, numskull
83 care not = couldn’t care less
84 have
85 on your neck = on your head/you
86 refute, contradict
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
        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.
          She false with Cassio! Did you say with Cassio?

Iago    With Cassio, mistress. Go to, charm\(^a\) 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!

Emilia  And your reports\(^b\) have set the murder on.\(^c\)

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!
          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.
          Perchance, Iago, I will ne’er go home.

Othello falls onto the bed

---

87 control, subdue
88 statements, accounts, testimony
89 set . . . on = incited, encouraged, arranged
Act 5 • Scene 2

Othello  O! O! O!

Emilia  Nay, lay thee down and roar.
For thou hast killed the sweetest innocent
That e’er did lift up eye.

Othello  (rising) O, she was foul!

I scarce did know you, uncle. 90 There lies your niece,
Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopped.
I know this act shows 91 horrible and grim.

Gratiano  Poor Desdemona. I am glad thy father’s dead.
Thy match was mortal 92 to him, and pure grief

Shore 93 his old thread 94 in twain 95. Did he live 96 now,
This sight would make him do a desperate turn, 97
Yea, curse his better angel from his side, 98
And fall to reprobance. 99

Othello  ’Tis pitiful. 100 But yet Iago knows

That she with Cassio hath the act of shame
A thousand times committed. Cassio confessed it,
And she did gratify 101 his amorous works 102
With that recognizance 103 and pledge of love

90 (custom made a spouse’s relatives one’s own relatives)
91 looks, appears
92 deadly, fatal
93 cut (past tense of “shear”)
94 thread of life
95 two
96 did he live = were he alive
97 desperate turn = despairing change in direction (“life reversal”)
98 his better angel from his side = his good guardian angel away from him
99 state of being lost in sin
100 lamentable
101 reward
102 deeds, doings
103 token, acknowledgment
Which I first gave her. I saw it in his hand.
It was a handkerchief, an antique token
My father gave my mother.

Emilia   O heaven! O heavenly powers!
Iago   Come, 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.
Iago   Be wise, and get you home.
Emilia   I will not.

IAGO TRIES TO STAB HIS WIFE

Gratiano   Fie! Your sword upon a woman?
Emilia   O thou dull Moor, that handkerchief thou speak’st of
   I found by fortune and did give my husband.
   For often with a solemn earnestness —
   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.
   (to Othello) O murd’rous coxcomb, what should such a fool

104 liberal as the north = free as the north wind
105 against
106 foolish, stupid
107 simpleton
Do with so good a wife?

Othello

Are there not stones\textsuperscript{108} in heaven
But what serve for thunder? \textit{(to Iago)} Precious\textsuperscript{109} villain!

Othello runs at Iago, who evades him, 
stabs Emilia, and runs out

Montano disarms Othello

235 Gratiano The woman falls. Sure, he hath killed his wife.

Emilia Ay, ay. O lay me by my mistress’ side.

Gratiano He’s gone, but his wife’s killed.

Montano ’Tis a notorious\textsuperscript{110} villain. Take you this weapon,
Which I have here recovered from the Moor.

Come, guard\textsuperscript{111} the door without,\textsuperscript{112} let him\textsuperscript{113} not pass,
But kill him rather. I’ll after\textsuperscript{114} that same villain,
For ’tis a damnèd slave.

exit Montano and Gratiano

240 Othello I am not valiant\textsuperscript{115} neither,\textsuperscript{116}

But every puny whipster\textsuperscript{117} gets\textsuperscript{118} my sword.
But why should honor outlive honesty?
Let it go all.

\textsuperscript{108} missiles, thunderbolts
\textsuperscript{109} out and out, total
\textsuperscript{110} obvious
\textsuperscript{111} you guard
\textsuperscript{112} door without = door outside this room
\textsuperscript{113} Othello
\textsuperscript{114} follow, pursue
\textsuperscript{115} (1) strong, sturdy, (2) bold, brave
\textsuperscript{116} either
\textsuperscript{117} puny whipster = insignificant/inferior/little fellow/boy (whipping a top)
\textsuperscript{118} takes possession of
Emilia What did thy song bode, lady?
Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan,
And die in music. 119 (sings) “Willow, willow, willow.”
Moor, she was chaste. She loved thee, cruel Moor.
So come my soul 120 to bliss, as I speak true.
So speaking as I think, alas, I die.

She dies

Othello I have another weapon in this chamber,
It was a sword of Spain, the ice-brook’s temper. 121
O, here it is. (calling) Uncle, I must come forth.

Gratiano (within) If thou attempt it, it will cost thee dear.
Thou hast no weapon, and perforce 122 must suffer. 123

Othello Look in upon me then, and speak with me,
Or naked 124 as I am I will assault thee.

Enter Gratiano

Gratiano What is the matter?

Othello Behold, I have a weapon.
A better never did itself sustain 125
Upon a soldier’s thigh. I have seen the day
That with this little 126 arm and this good sword
I have made my way through more impediments

119 (the swan was thought never to sing until just before its death)
120 come my soul = let/may my soul come
121 ice-brook’s temper = made of steel tempered/cooled in a frigid stream
(Spanish steel was considered second only to that of Damascus)
122 of necessity
123 endure bodily injury
124 unarmored? unarmed? (as Gratiano believes)
125 hang steadily/firmly/consistently
126 bare (O.E.D., s.v. “little,” 6b)
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
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?
(approaches Desdemona) Now. How dost thou look now? O ill-starred wench,
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. (touches her) Cold, cold, my girl?
Even like thy chastity. (to himself) O cursèd, cursèd slave!
Whip me, ye devils, From the possession of this heavenly sight!

127 obstruction, obstacle, prohibition
128 terminal point, boundary mark
129 (1) something highly visible from the sea, as a guide to navigation, (2) high tide
130 overwhelmed by fear
131 vain, groundless
132 man but a rush = (1) use only a reed-stalk (as in mock tournaments) against? (2) simply dash at?
133 ill-fated, unlucky
134 girl (familiar/affectionate)
135 shift, chemise (undergarment)
136 Judgment Day (compt = count/account = reckoning)
137 utter, devout purity (see As You Like It 3.4.15—17: “A nun ... kisses not more religiously, the very ice of chastity is in them [his kisses]”)
138 away from
139 physical/actual vision
140 divine
141 (hell’s devils were said to whip/drive condemned sinners away from anything sanctified, which might re-sanctify them)
Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
Wash me in steep-down\textsuperscript{142} gulfs of liquid fire!
O Desdemô! Dead Desdemô! Dead! O! O!

\textbf{enter Lodovico, Montano, Cassio in a chair,}
\textbf{and, behind them, Officers with Iago, prisoner}

\textit{Lodovico} Where is this rash, and most unfortunate man?
\textit{Othello} That’s he that was Othello. Here I am.
\textit{Lodovico} Where is that viper? Bring the villain forth.
\textit{Othello} I look down towards his feet.\textsuperscript{143} But that’s a fable.
\hspace{1em} (to Iago) If that thou be’st a devil, I cannot kill thee.

\textbf{he stabs Iago}

\textit{Lodovico} Wrench his sword from him.
\textit{Iago} (to Othello, sarcastically) I bleed, sir – but not killed.
\textit{Othello} I am not sorry neither. I’d have thee live.
\hspace{1em} For in my sense,\textsuperscript{144} ’tis happiness to die.
\textit{Lodovico} O thou Othello, that wert once so good,
\hspace{1em} Fallen in the practice\textsuperscript{145} of a cursèd slave,
\hspace{1em} What shall\textsuperscript{146} be said to thee?
\textit{Othello} Why, anything.
\hspace{1em} An honorable murderer, if you will.
\hspace{1em} For naught did I in\textsuperscript{147} hate, but all in honor.
\textit{Lodovico} This wretch hath part confessed his villainy.
\hspace{1em} Did you and he consent in Cassio’s death?

\textsuperscript{142} precipitous, sheer
\textsuperscript{143} (the Devil was thought to have a cloven foot)
\textsuperscript{144} in my sense = to my mind
\textsuperscript{145} brought low by the practices/scheming/treachery
\textsuperscript{146} ought to be
\textsuperscript{147} out/because of, with
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\textsuperscript{148} that demi-devil\textsuperscript{149} 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\textsuperscript{150} to pray?

Gratiano  Torments\textsuperscript{151} will ope your lips.

Othello  (to Iago) Well, thou dost best.

Lodovico  (to Othello) Sir, you shall\textsuperscript{152} 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\textsuperscript{153} and most gross!

Lodovico  Now here’s another discontented\textsuperscript{154} paper,

Found in his pocket too. And this, it seems,
Roderigo meant to have sent this damnèd villain,

But that, belike,\textsuperscript{155} Iago in the interim

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{148} \textit{ask} (French \textit{demander}, “to ask”)
\item \textsuperscript{149} (continuing the sarcastic wordplay between Othello and Iago?)
\item \textsuperscript{150} not even
\item \textsuperscript{151} torture
\item \textsuperscript{152} must
\item \textsuperscript{153} un-Christian/civilized, barbarous
\item \textsuperscript{154} irritated, vexed
\item \textsuperscript{155} probably, possibly
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Came in and satisfied him.

**Othello**

O thou pernicious caitiff!¹⁵⁶

How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief
That was my wife’s?

**Cassio**

I found it in my chamber.

And he himself confessed’t but even now
That there he dropped it for a special purpose
Which wrought to¹⁵⁷ his desire.

**Othello**

(to himself) O fool! fool! fool!

**Cassio**

There is besides, in Roderigo’s letter,

How he upbraids¹⁵⁸ Iago that he¹⁵⁹ made him
Brave¹⁶⁰ me upon¹⁶¹ the watch. Whereon¹⁶² it came¹⁶³
That I was cast. And even but now he spake –
After long seeming dead – Iago hurt¹⁶⁴ him,
Iago set him on.¹⁶⁵

**Lodovico**

(to Othello) You must forsake¹⁶⁶ this room,¹⁶⁷ and go
with us.

Your power and your command¹⁶⁸ is taken off,¹⁶⁹ And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For¹⁷⁰ this slave,
If there be any cunning cruelty
That can torment him much and hold him long,
It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest,\(^{172}\)
Till that the nature of your fault be known
To the Venetian state. Come, bring away.

**Othello** Soft you,\(^{174}\) a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know’t.
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,\(^{175}\)
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well.
Of one not easily jealous but, being wrought,\(^{176}\)
Perplexed\(^{177}\) in the extreme. Of one whose hand,
Like the base Judean,\(^{178}\) threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe. Of one whose subdued\(^{179}\) eyes,
Albeit unusèd to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this.
And say besides, that in Aleppo\(^{180}\) once,
Where a malignant\(^{181}\) and a turbaned Turk

171 preserve (“keep alive”)
172 shall close prisoner rest = must confined/strictly guarded prisoner remain
173 let yourself be brought/taken
174 soft you = wait
175 weaken, lessen
176 agitated
177 was entangled/bewildered
178 (Quarto: Indian; there being no specific reference, one non-Christian will do as well as another)
179 overcome
180 (a city in NW Syria)
181 malcontent, rebellious
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,\textsuperscript{182}
I took by th’throat the circumcisèd dog
And smote him (pulls out hidden dagger) thus.

\begin{center}
Othello stabs himself
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Lodovico} O bloody period!\textsuperscript{183}
\item \textit{Gratiano} All that’s spoke\textsuperscript{184} is marred.\textsuperscript{185}
\item \textit{Othello} I kissed thee ere I killed thee. No way but this,
(falling on Desdemona) Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
\end{itemize}

\begin{center}
Othello dies
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Cassio} This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon,
For he was great of heart.
\item \textit{Lodovico} (to Iago) O Spartan dog,\textsuperscript{186}
More fell\textsuperscript{187} than anguish, hunger, or the sea.
Look on the tragic loading of\textsuperscript{188} this bed.
This is thy work. The object\textsuperscript{189} poisons sight,
Let it be hid. Gratiano, keep\textsuperscript{190} the house,
And seize upon\textsuperscript{191} the fortunes\textsuperscript{192} of the Moor,
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{182} traduced the state = verbally slandered/defamed Venice
\textsuperscript{183} ending, conclusion, completion
\textsuperscript{184} that’s spoke = that has been said
\textsuperscript{185} ruined
\textsuperscript{186} Spartan dog = fiercely predatory animal (Theseus and Hippolyta, in \textit{A
Midsummer Night’s Dream}, act 4, scene 1, discuss the famous virtues of
Spartan hunting dogs; Iago is clearly not Spartan-like, nor is Lodovico
praising him)
\textsuperscript{187} cruel, ruthless, savage
\textsuperscript{188} loading of = load on (“cargo”)
\textsuperscript{189} spectacle, sight
\textsuperscript{190} attend to, take care of
\textsuperscript{191} seize upon = take possession of
\textsuperscript{192} estate, wealth
For they succeed on\(^{193}\) you. (to Cassio) To you, lord governor, Remains the censure\(^{194}\) of this hellish villain. The time, the place, the torture, O enforce it!\(^{195}\) Myself will\(^{196}\) straight aboard,\(^{197}\) and to the state

This heavy act\(^{198}\) with heavy heart relate.

**EXEUNT**

---

\(^{193}\) succeed on = pass by way of heredity (Othello’s deceased wife’s family being his only known heirs)

\(^{194}\) sentence and punishment

\(^{195}\) enforce it = impose/compel it, press it hard

\(^{196}\) will go/proceed

\(^{197}\) aboard ship (“sail”)

\(^{198}\) outcome, thing done
“The character of Iago . . . belongs to a class of characters common to Shakespeare, and at the same time peculiar to him—namely, that of great intellectual activity, accompanied with a total want of moral principle, and therefore displaying itself at the constant expense of others, and seeking to confound the practical distinctions of right and wrong, by referring them to some overstrained standard of speculative refinement.—Some persons, more nice than wise, have thought the whole of the character of Iago unnatural. Shakespeare, who was quite as good a philosopher as he was a poet, thought otherwise. He knew that the love of power, which is another name for the love of mischief, was natural to man. He would know this as well or better than if it had been demonstrated to him by a logical diagram, merely from seeing children paddle in the dirt, or kill flies for sport. We might ask those who think the character of Iago not natural, why they go to see it performed, but from the interest it excites, the sharper edge which it sets on their curiosity and imagination? Why do we go to see tragedies in general? Why do we always read the accounts in the newspapers of dreadful fires and shocking murders, but for
the same reason? Why do so many persons frequent executions and trials, or why do the lower classes almost universally take delight in barbarous sports and cruelty to animals, but because there is a natural tendency in the mind to strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties roused and stimulated to the utmost? Whenever this principle is not under the restraint of humanity, or the sense of moral obligation, there are no excesses to which it will not of itself give rise, without the assistance of any other motive, either of passion or self-interest. Iago is only an extreme instance of the kind; that is, of diseased intellectual activity, with a preference of the latter, because it falls more in with his favourite propensity, gives greater zest to his thoughts, and scope to his actions.—Be it observed, too, (for the sake of those who are for squaring all human actions by the maxims of Rochefoucault), that he is quite or nearly as indifferent to his own fate as to that of others; that he runs all risks for a trifling and doubtful advantage; and is himself the dupe and victim of his ruling passion—an incorrigible love of mischief—an insatiable craving after action of the most difficult and dangerous kind. Our ‘Ancient’ is a philosopher, who fancies that a lie that kills has more point in it than an alliteration or an antithesis; who thinks a fatal experiment on the peace of a family a better thing than watching the palpitations in the heart of a flea in an air-pump; who plots the ruin of his friends as an exercise for his understanding, and stabs men in the dark to prevent ennui.”—William Hazlitt

Since it is Othello’s tragedy, even if it is Iago’s play (not even Hamlet or Edmund seem to compose so much of their dramas), we need to restore some sense of Othello’s initial
dignity and glory. A bad modern tradition of criticism that goes from T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis through current New Historicism has divested the hero of his splendor, in effect doing Iago’s work so that, in Othello’s words, “Othello’s occupation’s gone.” Since 1919 or so, generals have lost esteem among the elite, though not always among the groundlings. Shakespeare himself subjected chivalric valor to the superb comic critique of Falstaff, who did not leave intact very much of the nostalgia for military prowess. But Falstaff, although he still inhabited a corner of Hamlet’s consciousness, is absent from Othello.

The clown scarcely comes on stage in Othello, though the Fool in Lear, the drunken porter at the gate in Macbeth, and the fig-and-asp seller in Antony and Cleopatra maintain the persistence of tragicomedy in Shakespeare after Hamlet. Only Othello and Coriolanus exclude all laughter, as if to protect two great captains from the Falstaffian perspective. When Othello, doubtless the fastest sword in his profession, wants to stop a street fight, he need only utter the one massive and menacingly monosyllabic line “Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.”

To see Othello in his unfallen splendor, within the play, becomes a little difficult, because he so readily seems to become Iago’s dupe. Shakespeare, as before in Henry IV, Part One, and directly after in King Lear, gives us the responsibility of foregrounding by inference. As the play opens, Iago assures his gull, Roderigo, that he hates Othello, and he states the only true motive for his hatred, which is what Milton’s Satan calls “a Sense of Injured Merit.” Satan (as Milton did not wish to know) is the legitimate son of Iago, begot by Shakespeare upon Milton’s Muse. Iago, long Othello’s “ancient” (his ensign, or flag officer, the third-in-command), has been passed over for promotion, and Cassio
has become Othello’s lieutenant. No reason is given for Othello’s decision; his regard for “honest Iago,” bluff veteran of Othello’s “big wars,” remains undiminished. Indeed, Iago’s position as flag officer, vowed to die rather than let Othello’s colors be captured in battle, testifies both to Othello’s trust and to Iago’s former devotion. Paradoxically, that quasi-religious worship of the war god Othello by his true believer Iago can be inferred as the cause of Iago’s having been passed over. Iago, as Harold Goddard finely remarked, is always at war; he is a moral pyromaniac setting fire to all of reality. Othello, the skilled professional who maintains the purity of arms by sharply dividing the camp of war from that of peace, would have seen in his brave and zealous ancient someone who could not replace him were he to be killed or wounded. Iago cannot stop fighting, and so cannot be preferred to Cassio, who is relatively inexperienced (a kind of staff officer) but who is courteous and diplomatic and knows the limits of war.

Sound as Othello’s military judgment clearly was, he did not know Iago, a very free artist of himself. The catastrophe that foregrounds Shakespeare’s play is what I would want to call the Fall of Iago, which sets the paradigm for Satan’s Fall in Milton. Milton’s God, like Othello, pragmatically demotes his most ardent devotee, and the wounded Satan rebels. Unable to bring down the Supreme Being, Satan ruins Adam and Eve instead, but the subtler Iago can do far better, because his only God is Othello himself, whose fall becomes the appropriate revenge for Iago’s evidently sickening loss of being at rejection, with consequences including what may be sexual impotence, and what certainly is a sense of nullity, of no longer being what one was. Iago is Shakespeare’s largest study in ontotheological absence, a sense of the void that
follows on from Hamlet’s, and that directly precedes Edmund’s more restricted but even more affectless excursion into the uncanniness of nihilism. Othello was everything to Iago, because war was everything; passed over, Iago is nothing, and in warring against Othello, his war is against ontology.

Tragic drama is not necessarily metaphysical, but Iago, who says he is nothing if not critical, also is nothing if not metaphysical. His grand boast “I am not what I am” deliberately repeals St. Paul’s “By the grace of God I am what I am.” With Iago, Shakespeare is enabled to return to the Machiavel, yet now not to another Aaron the Moor or Richard III, both versions of Barabas, Jew of Malta, but to a character light-years beyond Marlowe. The self-delight of Barabas, Aaron, and Richard III in their own villainy is childlike compared with Iago’s augmenting pride in his achievement as psychologist, dramatist, and aesthete (the first modern one) as he contemplates the total ruin of the war god Othello, reduced to murderous incoherence. Iago’s accomplishment in revenge tragedy far surpasses Hamlet’s revision of The Murder of Gonzago into The Mousetrap. Contemplate Iago’s achievement: his unaided genius has limned this night piece, and it was his best. He will die under torture, silently, but he will have left a mutilated reality as his monument.

W. H. Auden, in one of his most puzzling critical essays, found in Iago the apotheosis of the practical joker, which I find explicable only by realizing that Auden’s Iago was Verdi’s (that is, Arrigo Boito’s), just as Auden’s Falstaff was operatic, rather than dramatic. One should not try to restrict Iago’s genius; he is a great artist, and no joker. Milton’s Satan is a failed theologian and a great poet, while Iago shines equally as nihilistic death-of-God
theologue and as advanced dramatic poet. Shakespeare endowed only Hamlet, Falstaff, and Rosalind with more wit and intellect than he gave to Iago and Edmund, while in aesthetic sensibility, only Hamlet overgoes Iago. Grant Iago his Ahab-like obsession—Othello is the Moby-Dick who must be harpooned—and Iago’s salient quality rather outrageously is his freedom. A great improviser, he works with gusto and mastery of timing, adjusting his plot to openings as they present themselves. If I were a director of Othello, I would instruct my Iago to manifest an ever-growing wonder and confidence in the diabolic art. Unlike Barabas and his progeny, Iago is an inventor, an experimenter always willing to try modes heretofore unknown. Auden, in a more inspired moment, saw Iago as a scientist rather than a practical joker. Satan, exploring the untracked Abyss in Paradise Lost, is truly in Iago’s spirit. Who before Iago, in literature or in life, perfected the arts of disinformation, disorientation, and derangement? All these combine in Iago’s grand program of uncreation, as Othello is returned to original chaos, to the Tohu and Bohu from which we came.

Even a brief glance at Shakespeare’s source in Cinthio reveals the extent to which Iago is essentially Shakespeare’s radical invention, rather than an adaptation of the wicked Ensign in the original story. Cinthio’s Ensign falls passionately in love with Desdemona, but wins no favor with her, since she loves the Moor. The unnamed Ensign decides that his failure is due to Desdemona’s love for an unnamed Captain (Shakespeare’s Cassio), and so he determines to remove this supposed rival, by inducing jealousy in the Moor and then plotting with him to murder both Desdemona and the Captain. In Cinthio’s version, the Ensign beats Desdemona to death, while the Moor watches approvingly. It is
only afterward, when the Moor repents and desperately misses his wife, that he dismisses the Ensign, who thus is first moved to hatred against his general. Shakespeare transmuted the entire story by giving it, and Iago, a different starting point, the foreground in which Iago has been passed over for promotion. The ontological shock of that rejection is Shakespeare’s original invention and is the trauma that truly creates Iago, no mere wicked Ensign but rather a genius of evil who has engendered himself from a great Fall.

Milton’s Satan owes so much to Iago that we can be tempted to read the Christian Fall of Adam into Othello’s catastrophe, and to find Lucifer’s decline into Satan a clue to Iago’s inception. But though Shakespeare’s Moor has been baptized, Othello is no more a Christian drama than Hamlet was a doctrinal tragedy of guilt, sin, and pride. Iago playfully invokes a “Divinity of Hell,” and yet he is no mere diabolist. He is War Everlasting (as Jean-Luc Goddard sensed) and inspires in me the same uncanny awe and fright that Cormac McCarthy’s Judge Holden arouses each time I reread Blood Meridian, Or, The Evening Redness in the West (1985).

The Judge, though based on a historic filibuster who massacred and scalped Indians in the post–Civil War Southwest and in Mexico, is War Incarnate. A reading of his formidable pronun-ciamentos provides a theology-in-little of Iago’s enterprise, and betrays perhaps a touch of Iago’s influence upon Blood Meridian, an American descendant of the Shakespeare-intoxicated Herman Melville and William Faulkner. “War,” says the Judge, “is the truest form of divination. . . . War is god,” because war is the supreme game of will against will. Iago is the genius of will reborn from war’s slighting of the will. To have been passed over for Cassio is to have one’s will reduced to nullity, and the self’s sense of power vi-
olated. Victory for the will therefore demands a restoration of power, and power for Iago can only be war’s power: to maim, to kill, to humiliate, to destroy the godlike in another, the war god who betrayed his worship and his trust. Cormac McCarthy’s Judge Holden is Iago come again when he proclaims war as the game that defines us:

Wolves cull themselves, man. What other creature could? And is the race of man not more predacious yet? The way of the world is to bloom and flower and die but in the affairs of men there is no waning and the moon of his expression signals the onset of night. His spirit is exhausted at the peak of its achievement. His meridian is at once his darkening and the evening of his day. He loves games? Let him play for stakes.

In Iago, what was the religion of war, when he worshiped Othello as its god, has now become the game of war, to be played everywhere except upon the battlefield. The death of belief becomes the birth of invention, and the passed-over officer becomes the poet of street brawls, stabbings in the dark, disinformation, and above all else, the uncreation of Othello, the sparagmos of the great captain-general so that he can be returned to the original abyss, the chaos that Iago equates with the Moor’s African origins. That is not Othello’s view of his heritage (or Shakespeare’s), but Iago’s interpretation wins, or almost wins, since I will argue that Othello’s much-maligned suicide speech is something very close to a recovery of dignity and coherence, though not of lost greatness. Iago, forever beyond Othello’s understanding, is not beyond ours, because we are more like Iago than we resemble Othello; Iago’s views on war, on the will, and on the aesthetics of re-
venge inaugurate our own pragmatics of understanding the human.

We cannot arrive at a just estimate of Othello if we undervalue Iago, who would be formidable enough to undo most of us if he emerged out of his play into our lives. Othello is a great soul hopelessly outclassed in intellect and drive by Iago. Hamlet, as A. C. Bradley once observed, would have disposed of Iago very readily. In a speech or two, Hamlet would discern Iago for what he was, and then would drive Iago to suicide by lightning parody and mockery. Falstaff and Rosalind would do much the same, Falstaff boisterously and Rosalind gently. Only humor could defend against Iago, which is why Shakespeare excludes all comedy from Othello, except for Iago’s saturnine hilarity. Even there, a difference emerges; Barabas and his Shakespearean imitators share their triumphalism with the audience, whereas Iago, at the top of his form, seems to be sending us postcards from the volcano, as remote from us as he is from all his victims. “You come next,” something in him implies, and we wince before him. “With all his poetic gift, he has no poetic weakness,” A. C. Swinburne said of Iago. The prophet of Resentment, Iago presages Smerdyakov, Svidrigailov, and Stavrogin in Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and all the ascetics of the spirit deplored by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Yet he is so much more than that; among all literary villains, he is by merit raised to a bad eminence that seems unsurpassable. His only near-rival, Edmund, partly repents while dying, in a gesture more enigmatic than Iago’s final election of silence. Great gifts of intellect and art alone could not bring Iago to his heroic villainy; he has a negative grace beyond cognition and perceptiveness. The public sphere gave Marlowe his Guise in The Massacre at Paris, but the Guise is a mere imp of evil when juxtaposed to Iago. The
Devil himself—in Milton, Marlowe, J. W. van Goethe, Dostoyevsky, Melville, or any other writer—cannot compete with Iago, whose American descendants range from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Chillingworth and Melville’s Claggart through Mark Twain’s Mysterious Stranger on to Nathanael West’s Shrike and Cormac McCarthy’s Judge Holden. Modern literature has not surpassed Iago; he remains the perfect Devil of the West, superb as psychologist, playwright, dramatic critic, and negative theologian. G. B. Shaw, jealous of Shakespeare, argued that “the character defies all consistency,” being at once “a coarse blackguard” and also refined and subtle. Few have agreed with Shaw, and those who question Iago’s persuasiveness tend also to find Othello a flawed representation. A. C. Bradley, an admirable critic always, named Falstaff, Hamlet, Iago, and Cleopatra as Shakespeare’s “most wonderful” characters. If I could add Rosalind and Macbeth to make a sixfold wonder, then I would agree with Bradley, for these are Shakespeare’s grandest inventions, and all of them take human nature to some of its limits, without violating those limits. Falstaff’s wit, Hamlet’s ambivalent yet charismatic intensity, Cleopatra’s mobility of spirit find their rivals in Macbeth’s proleptic imagination, Rosalind’s control of all perspectives, and Iago’s genius for improvisation. Neither merely coarse nor merely subtle, Iago constantly re-creates his own personality and character: “I am not what I am.” Those who question how a twenty-eight-year-old professional soldier could harbor so sublimely negative a genius might just as soon question how the thirty-nine-year-old professional actor, Shakespeare, could imagine so convincing a “demi-devil” (as Othello finally terms Iago). We think that Shakespeare abandoned acting just before he composed Othello; he seems to have played his final role in All’s Well That Ends Well. Is there some link
between giving up the player’s part and the invention of Iago? Between *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Othello*, Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure*, a farewell to stage comedy. *Measure for Measure*’s enigmatic Duke Vincentio, as I have observed, seems to have some Iago-like qualities, and may also relate to Shakespeare’s release from the burden of performance. Clearly a versatile and competent actor, but never a leading one, Shakespeare perhaps celebrates a new sense of the actor’s energies in the improvisations of Vincentio and Iago.

Bradley, in exalting Falstaff, Hamlet, Iago, and Cleopatra, may have been responding to the highly conscious theatricalism that is fused into their roles. Witty in himself, Falstaff provokes wit in others through his performances. Hamlet, analytical tragedian, discourses with everyone he encounters, driving them to self-revelation. Cleopatra is always on stage—living, loving, and dying—and whether she ceases to perform, when alone with Antony, we will never know, because Shakespeare never shows them alone together, save once, and that is very brief. Perhaps Iago, before the Fall of his rejection by Othello, had not yet discovered his own dramatic genius; it seems the largest pragmatic consequence of his Fall, once his sense of nullity has passed through an initial trauma. When we first hear him, at the start of the play, he already indulges his actor’s freedom:

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
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,
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.

[1.1.39–53]

Only the actor, Iago assures us, possesses “some soul”; the rest of us wear our hearts upon our sleeves. Yet this is only the start of a player’s career; at this early point, Iago is merely out for mischief, rousing up Brabantio, Desdemona’s father, and conjuring up street brawls. He knows that he is exploring a new vocation, but he has little sense as yet of his own genius. Shakespeare, while Iago gathers force, centers instead upon giving us a view of Othello’s precarious greatness, and of Desdemona’s surpassing human worth. Before turning to the Moor and his bride, I wish further to foreground Iago, who requires quite as much inferential labor as do Hamlet and Falstaff.

Richard III and Edmund have fathers; Shakespeare gives us no antecedents for Iago. We can surmise the ancient’s previous relationship to his superb captain. What can we infer of his marriage to Emilia? There is Iago’s curious mistake in his first mention of Cassio: “A fellow almost damned in a fair wife.” This seems not to be Shakespeare’s error but a token of Iago’s obsessive concern with marriage as a damnation, since Bianca is plainly Cassio’s whore and not his wife. Emilia, no better than she should be, will
be the ironic instrument that undoes Iago’s triumphalism, at the
cost of her life. As to the relationship between this singular cou-
ple, Shakespeare allows us some pungent hints. Early in the play,
Iago tells us what neither he nor we believe, not because of any
shared regard for Emilia but because Othello is too grand for this:

And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office. I know not if't be true,
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety.

[1.3.380–83]

Later, Iago parenthetically expresses the same “mere suspi-
cion” of Cassio: “For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too.” We
can surmise that Iago, perhaps made impotent by his fury at being
passed over for promotion, is ready to suspect Emilia with every
male in the play, while not particularly caring one way or the
other. Emilia, comforting Desdemona after Othello’s initial rage
of jealousy against his blameless wife, sums up her own marriage
also:

'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.

[3.4.101–4]

That is the erotic vision of Troilus and Cressida, carried over
into a greater realm, but not a less rancid one, because the world
of Othello belongs to Iago. It is not persuasive to say that Othello
is a normal man and Iago abnormal; Iago is the genius of his time
and place, and is all will. His passion for destruction is the only
creative passion in the play. Such a judgment is necessarily very somber, but then this is surely Shakespeare’s most painful play. *King Lear* and *Macbeth* are even darker, but theirs is the darkness of the negative sublime. The only sublimity in *Othello* is Iago’s. Shakespeare’s conception of him was so definitive that the revisions made between the Quarto’s text and the Folio’s enlarge and sharpen our sense primarily of Emilia, and secondly of Othello and Desdemona, but hardly touch Iago. Shakespeare rightly felt no need to revise Iago, already the perfection of malign will and genius for hatred. There can be no question concerning Iago’s primacy in the play: he speaks eight soliloquies, Othello only three.

Edmund outthinks and so outplots everyone else in *King Lear*, and yet is destroyed by the recalcitrant endurance of Edgar, who develops from credulous victim into inexorable revenger. Iago, even more totally the master of his play, is at last undone by Emilia, whom Shakespeare revised into a figure of intrepid outrage, willing to die for the sake of the murdered Desdemona’s good name. Shakespeare had something of a tragic obsession with the idea of a good name living on after his protagonists’ deaths. Hamlet, despite saying that no man can know anything of whatever he leaves behind him, nevertheless exhorts Horatio to survive so as to defend what might become of his prince’s wounded name. We will hear Othello trying to recuperate some shred of reputation in his suicidal final speech, upon which critical agreement no longer seems at all possible. If the *Funeral Elegy* for Will Peter indeed was Shakespeare’s (I think this probable), then the poet-dramatist in 1612, four years before his own death at fifty-two, was much preoccupied with his own evidently blemished name.
Emilia’s heroic victory over Iago is one of Shakespeare’s grandest ironies, and appropriately constitutes the play’s most surprising dramatic moment:

_Emilia_ O heaven! O heavenly powers!

_Iago_ Come, 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.

_Iago_ Be wise, and get you home.

_Emilia_ I will not.

_IAGO TRIES TO STAB HIS WIFE_

_Gratiano_ Fie! Your sword upon a woman?

_Emilia_ O thou dull Moor, that handkerchief thou speak’st of
I found by fortune and did give my husband.
For often with a solemn earnestness—
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.
O murd’rous coxcomb, what should such a fool
Do with so good a wife?

_Othello_ Are there not stones in heaven
But what serve for thunder? (to _Iago_) Precious villain!
Othello runs at Iago, who evades him, stabs Emilia, and runs out

Montano disarms Othello

Gnatiano The woman falls. Sure, he hath killed his wife.
Emilia Ay, ay. O lay me by my mistress’ side.
Gnatiano He’s gone, but his wife’s killed.

[5.2.217–37]

We are surprised, but Iago is shocked; indeed it is his first reversal since being passed over for Cassio. That Emilia should lose her worldly wisdom, and become as free as the north wind, was the only eventuality that Iago could not foresee. And his failure to encompass his wife’s best aspect—her love for and pride in Desdemona—is the one lapse for which he cannot forgive himself. That is the true undersong of the last lines he ever will allow himself to utter, and which are directed as much to us as to Othello or to Cassio:

Othello 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.

[5.2.300–3]

What is it that we know, beyond what Othello and Cassio know? Shakespeare’s superb dramatic irony transcends even that question into the subtler matter of allowing us to know something about Iago that the ancient, despite his genius, is incapable of knowing. Iago is outraged that he could not anticipate, by dramatic imagination, his wife’s outrage that Desdemona should be
not only murdered but perhaps permanently defamed. The aesthete’s web has all of war’s gamelike magic, but no place in it for Emilia’s honest indignation. Where he ought to have been at his most discerning—within his marriage—Iago is blank and blind. The superb psychologist who unseamed Othello, and who deftly manipulated Desdemona, Cassio, Roderigo, and all others, angrily falls into the fate he arranged for his prime victim, the Moor, and becomes another wife murderer. He has, at last, set fire to himself.

Since the world is Iago’s, I scarcely am done expounding him, and will examine him again in an overview of the play, but only after brooding upon the many enigmas of Othello. Where Shakespeare granted Hamlet, Lear, and Macbeth an almost continuous and preternatural eloquence, he chose instead to give Othello a curiously mixed power of expression, distinct yet divided, and deliberately flawed. Iago’s theatricalism is superb, but Othello’s is troublesome, brilliantly so. The Moor tells us that he has been a warrior since he was seven, presumably a hyperbole but indicative that he is all too aware his greatness has been hard won. His professional self-awareness is extraordinarily intense; partly this is inevitable, since he is technically a mercenary, a black soldier of fortune who honorably serves the Venetian state. And yet his acute sense of his reputation betrays what may well be an uneasiness, sometimes manifested in the baroque elaborations of his language, satirized by Iago as “a bombast circumstance, / Horribly stuffed with epithets of war.”

A military commander who can compare the movement of his mind to the “icy current and compulsive course” of the Pontic (Black) Sea, Othello seems incapable of seeing himself except in
grandiose terms. He presents himself as a living legend or walking myth, nobler than any antique Roman. The poet Anthony Hecht thinks that we are meant to recognize “a ludicrous and nervous vanity” in Othello, but Shakespeare’s adroit perspectivism evades so single a recognition. Othello has a touch of Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar in him; there is an ambiguity in both figures that makes it very difficult to trace the demarcations between their vainglory and their grandeur. If you believe in the war god Caesar (as Antony does) or in the war god Othello (as Iago once did), then you lack the leisure to contemplate the god’s failings. But if you are Cassius, or the postlapsarian Iago, then you are at pains to behold the weaknesses that mask as divinity. Othello, like Caesar, is prone to refer to himself in the third person, a somewhat unnerving habit; whether in literature or in life. And yet, again like Julius Caesar, Othello believes his own myth, and to some extent we must also, because there is authentic nobility in the language of his soul. That there is opacity also, we cannot doubt; Othello’s tragedy is precisely that Iago should know him better than the Moor knows himself.

Othello is a great commander, who knows war and the limits of war but who knows little else, and cannot know that he does not know. His sense of himself is very large, in that its scale is vast, but he sees himself from afar as it were; up close, he hardly confronts the void at his center. Iago’s apprehension of that abyss is sometimes compared to Montaigne’s; I sooner would compare it to Hamlet’s, because like one element in the infinitely varied Prince of Denmark, Iago is well beyond skepticism and has crossed into nihilism. Iago’s most brilliant insight is that if he was reduced to nothingness by Cassio’s preferment, then how much more vulnerable Othello must be, lacking Iago’s intellect and
game-playing will. Anyone can be pulverized, in Iago’s view, and in this drama he is right. There is no one in the play with the irony and wit that alone could hold off Iago: Othello is consciously theatrical but quite humorless, and Desdemona is a miracle of sincerity. The terrible painfulness of Othello is that Shakespeare shrewdly omits any counterforce to Iago. In King Lear, Edmund also confronts no one with the intellect to withstand him, until he is annihilated by the exquisite irony of having created the nameless avenger who was once his gull, Edgar. First and last, Othello is powerless against Iago; that helplessness is the most harrowing element in the play, except perhaps for Desdemona’s double powerlessness, in regard both to Iago and to her husband.

It is important to emphasize the greatness of Othello, despite all his inadequacies of language and of spirit. Shakespeare implicitly celebrates Othello as a giant of mere being, an ontological splendor, and so a natural man self-raised to an authentic if precarious eminence. Even if we doubt the possibility of the purity of arms, Othello plausibly represents that lost ideal. At every point, he is the antithesis of Iago’s “I am not what I am,” until he begins to come apart under Iago’s influence. Manifestly, Desdemona has made a wrong choice in a husband, and yet that choice testifies to Othello’s hard-won splendor. These days, when so many academic critics are converted to the recent French fashion of denying the self, some of them happily seize upon Othello as a fit instance. They undervalue how subtle Shakespeare’s art can be; Othello indeed may seem to prompt James Calderwood’s Lacanian observation: “Instead of a self-core discoverable at the center of his being, Othello’s ‘I am’ seems a kind of internal repertory company, a ‘we are.’”

If Othello, at the play’s start, or at its close, is only the sum of his
self-descriptions, then indeed he could be judged a veritable pic-
nic of souls. But his third-person relation to his own images of self
testifies not to a “we are” but to a perpetual romanticism at seeing
and describing himself. To some degree, he is a self-enchanter, as
well as the enchanter of Desdemona. Othello desperately wants
and needs to be the protagonist of a Shakespearean romance, but
alas he is the hero-victim of this most painful Shakespearean do-
metric tragedy of blood. John Jones makes the fine observation
that Lear in the Quarto version is a romance figure, but then is re-
vised by Shakespeare into the tragic being of the Folio text. As
Iago’s destined gull, Othello presented Shakespeare with enor-
mous problems in representation. How are we to believe in the
essential heroism, largeness, and loving nature of so catastrophic a
protagonist? Since Desdemona is the most admirable image of
love in all Shakespeare, how are we to sympathize with her in-
creasingly incoherent destroyer, who renders her the unluckiest
of all wives? Romance, literary and human, depends on partial or
imperfect knowledge. Perhaps Othello never gets beyond that,
even in his final speech, but Shakespeare shrewdly frames the ro-
mance of Othello within the tragedy of Othello, and thus solves
the problem of sympathetic representation.

Othello is not a “poem unlimited,” beyond genre, like Hamlet,
but the romance elements in its three principal figures do make it
a very uncommon tragedy. Iago is a triumph because he is in ex-
actly the right play for an ontotheological villain, while the char-
itable Desdemona is superbly suited to this drama also. Othello
cannot quite fit, but then that is his sociopolitical dilemma, the
heroic Moor commanding the armed forces of Venice, sophisti-
cated in its decadence then as now. Shakespeare mingles commer-
cial realism and visionary romance in his portrait of Othello, and
the mix necessarily is unsteady, even for this greatest of all makers. Yet we do Othello wrong to offer him the show of violence, whether by unselfing him or by devaluing his goodness. Iago, nothing if not critical, has a keener sense of Othello than most of us now tend to achieve: “The Moor is of a free and open nature / That thinks men honest that but seem to be so.”

There are not many in Shakespeare, or in life, that are “of a free and open nature”: to suppose that we are to find Othello ludicrous or paltry is to mistake the play badly. He is admirable, a tower among men, but soon enough he becomes a broken tower. Shakespeare’s own Hector, Ulysses, and Achilles, in his *Troilus and Cressida*, were all complex travesties of their Homeric originals (in George Chapman’s version), but Othello is precisely Homeric, as close as Shakespeare desired to come to Chapman’s heroes. Within his clear limitations, Othello indeed is “noble”: his consciousness, prior to his fall, is firmly controlled, just, and massively dignified, and has its own kind of perfection. Reuben Brower admirably said of Othello that “his heroic simplicity was also heroic blindness. That too is part of the ‘ideal’ hero, part of Shakespeare’s metaphor.” The metaphor, no longer quite Homeric, had to extend to the professionalism of a great mercenary soldier and a heroic black in the service of a highly decadent white society. Othello’s superb professionalism is at once his extraordinary strength and his tragic freedom to fall. The love between Desdemona and Othello is authentic, yet might have proved catastrophic even in the absence of the daemonic genius of Iago. Nothing in Othello is marriageable: his military career fulfills him completely. Desdemona, persuasively innocent in the highest of senses, falls in love with the pure warrior in Othello, and he falls in love with her love for him, her mirroring of his legendary

AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM

225
career. Their romance is his own pre-existent romance; the marriage does not and cannot change him, though it changes his relationship to Venice, in the highly ironic sense of making him more than ever an outsider.

Othello’s character has suffered the assaults of T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis and their various followers, but fashions in Shakespeare criticism always vanish, and the noble Moor has survived his denigrators. Yet Shakespeare has endowed Othello with the authentic mystery of being a radically flawed hero, an Adam too free to fall. In some respects, Othello is Shakespeare’s most wounding representation of male vanity and fear of female sexuality, and so of the male equation that makes the fear of cuckoldry and the fear of mortality into a single dread. Leontes, in The Winter’s Tale, is partly a study in repressed homosexuality, and thus his virulent jealousy is of another order than Othello’s. We wince when Othello, in his closing apologia, speaks of himself as one not easily jealous, and we wonder at his blindness. Still we never doubt his valor, and this makes it even stranger that he at least matches Leontes in jealous madness. Shakespeare’s greatest insight into male sexual jealousy is that it is a mask for the fear of being castrated by death. Men imagine that there never can be enough time and space for themselves, and they find in cuckoldry, real or imaginary, the image of their own vanishing, the realization that the world will go on without them.

Othello sees the world as a theater for his professional reputation; this most valiant of soldiers has no fear of literal death-in-battle, which only would enhance his glory. But to be cuckolded by his own wife, and with his subordinate Cassio as the other offender, would be a greater, metaphorical death-in-life, for his reputation would not survive it, particularly in his own view of
his mythic renown. Shakespeare is sublimely daemonic, in a mode transcending even Iago’s genius, in making Othello’s vulnerabil-
ity exactly consonant with the wound rendered to Iago’s self-
regard by being passed over for promotion. Iago says, “I am not what I am”; Othello’s loss of ontological dignity would be even greater, had Desdemona “betrayed” him (I place the word be-
tween quotation marks, because the implicit metaphor involved is a triumph of male vanity). Othello all too self-consciously has risked his hard-won sense of his own being in marrying Desde-
mona, and he has an accurate foreboding of chaotic engulfment should that risk prove a disaster:

Excellent wretch. Perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee. And when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

[3.3.91–93]

An earlier intimation of Othello’s uneasiness is one of the play’s subtlest touches:

For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhousèd free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea’s worth.

[1.2.23–27]

Othello’s psychological complexity has to be reconstructed by the audience from his ruins, as it were, because Shakespeare does not supply us with the full foreground. We are given the hint that but for Desdemona, he never would have married, and indeed he himself describes a courtship in which he was essentially passive:
These things to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline,
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
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
But not intently. I did consent,
And often did beguile her of her tears,
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 kisses.
She swore, in faith, ’twas strange, ’twas passing strange,
’Twas pitiful, ’twas wondrous pitiful.
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:
She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.

[1.3.145–68]

That is rather more than a “hint,” and nearly constitutes a boldly direct proposal, on Desdemona’s part. With the Venetian competition evidently confined to the likes of Roderigo, Desdemona is willingly seduced by Othello’s naive but powerful ro-
mance of the self, provocative of that “world of kisses.” The Moor is not only noble; his saga brings “a maiden never bold” (her father’s testimony) “to fall in love with what she feared to look on.” Desdemona, a High Romantic centuries ahead of her time, yields to the fascination of quest, if yields can be an accurate word for so active a surrender. No other match in Shakespeare is so fabulously unlikely, or so tragically inevitable. Even in a Venice and a Cyprus without Iago, how does so improbable a romance domesticate itself? The high point of passion between Othello and Desdemona is their reunion on Cyprus:

Othello  O my fair warrior.

Desdemona  My dear Othello.

Othello  It gives me wonder great as my content
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 laboring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
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
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.
AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM

And this, and this, the greatest discords be

HE KISES HER

That e’er our hearts shall make.

[2.1.177–94]

From such an apotheosis one can only descend, even if the answering chorus were not Iago’s aside that he will loosen the strings now so well tuned. Shakespeare (as I have ventured before, following my master, Dr. Johnson) came naturally to comedy and to romance, but violently and ambivalently to tragedy. Othello may have been as painful for Shakespeare as he made it for us. Placing the precarious nobility of Othello and the fragile romanticism of Desdemona upon one stage with the sadistic aestheticism of Iago (ancestor of all modern literary critics) was already an outrageous coup of self-wounding on the poet-dramatist’s part. I am delighted to revive the now scoffed-at romantic speculation that Shakespeare carries a private affliction, an erotic vastation, into the high tragedies, Othello in particular. Shakespeare is, of course, not Lord Byron, scandalously parading before Europe the pageant of his bleeding heart, yet the incredible agony we rightly undergo as we observe Othello murdering Desdemona has a private as well as public intensity informing it. Desdemona’s murder is the crossing point between the overflowing cosmos of Hamlet and the cosmological emptiness of Lear and of Macbeth.

The play Hamlet and the mind of Hamlet verge upon an identity, since everything that happens to the Prince of Denmark already seems to be the prince. We cannot quite say that the mind of Iago and the play Othello are one, since his victims have their own
greatness. Yet, until Emilia confounds him, the drama’s action is Iago’s; only the tragedy of their tragedy belongs to Othello and Desdemona. In 1604, an anonymous storyteller reflected upon “Shakespeare’s tragedies, where the Comedian rides, when the Tragedian stands on Tip-toe.” This wonderful remark was made of Prince Hamlet, who “pleased all,” but more subtly illuminates Othello, where Shakespeare-as-comedian rides Iago, even as the dramatist stands on tip-toe to extend the limits of his so painful art. We do not know who in Shakespeare’s company played Iago against Burbage’s Othello, but I wonder if it was not the great clown Robert Armin, who would have played the drunken porter at the gage in Macbeth, the Fool in King Lear, and the asp bearer in Antony and Cleopatra. The dramatic shock in Othello is that we delight in Iago’s exuberant triumphalism, even as we dread his villainy’s consequences. Marlowe’s self-delighting Barabas, echoed by Aaron the Moor and Richard III, seems a cruder Machiavel when we compare him with the refined Iago, who confounds Barabas with aspects of Hamlet, in order to augment his own growing inwardness. With Hamlet, we confront the ever-growing inner self, but Iago has no inner self, only a fecund abyss, precisely like his descendant, Milton’s Satan, who in every deep found a lower deep opening wide. Satan’s discovery is agonized; Iago’s is diabolically joyous. Shakespeare invents in Iago a sublimely sadistic comic poet, an archon of nihilism who delights in returning his war god to an uncreated night. Can you invent Iago without delighting in your invention, even as we delight in our ambivalent reception of Iago?

Iago is not larger than his play; he perfectly fits it, unlike Hamlet, who would be too large even for the most unlimited of plays. I have noted already that Shakespeare made significant revisions
to what is spoken by Othello, Desdemona, and Emilia (even Roderigo) but not by Iago; it is as though Shakespeare knew he had gotten Iago right the first time round. No villain in all literature rivals Iago as a flawless conception, who requires no improvement. Swinburne was accurate: “the most perfect evildom, the most potent demi-devil,” and “a reflection by hell-fire of the figure of Prometheus.” A Satanic Prometheus may at first appear too High Romantic, yet the pyromaniac Iago encourages Roderigo to a

dire yell

As when, by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities.

[1.1.73–75]

According to the myth, Prometheus steals fire to free us; Iago steals us, as fresh fodder for the fire. He is an authentic Promethean, however negative, because who can deny that Iago’s fire is poetic? The hero-villains of John Webster and Cyril Tourneur are mere names on the page when we contrast them with Iago; they lack Promethean fire. Who else in Shakespeare, except for Hamlet and Falstaff, is so creative as Iago? These three alone can read your soul, and read everyone they encounter. Perhaps Iago is the recompense that the Negative demanded to counterbalance Hamlet, Falstaff, and Rosalind. Great wit, like the highest irony, needs an inner check in order not to burn away everything else: Hamlet’s disinterestedness, Falstaff’s exuberance, Rosalind’s graciousness. Iago is nothing at all, except critical; there can be no inner check when the self is an abyss. Iago has the single affect of sheer gusto, increasingly aroused as he discovers his genius for improvisation.
Since the plot of *Othello* essentially is Iago’s plot, improvisation by Iago constitutes the tragedy’s heart and center. Hazlitt’s review of Edmund Kean’s performance as Iago in 1814, from which I have drawn my epigraph for this essay, remains the finest analysis of Iago’s improvisatory genius, and is most superb when it observes that Iago “stabs men in the dark to prevent ennui.” That prophetic insight advances Iago to the Age of Charles Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Dostoyevsky, an Age that in many respects remains our own. Iago is not a Jacobean Italian malcontent, another descendant of Marlowe’s Machiavels. His greatness is that he is out ahead of us, though every newspaper and television newscast brings us accounts of his disciples working on every scale, from individual crimes of sadomasochism to international terrorism and massacre. Iago’s followers are everywhere: I have watched, with great interest, many of my former students, undergraduate and graduate, pursue careers of Iagoism, both in and out of the academy. Shakespeare’s great male intellectuals (as contrasted to Rosalind and Beatrice, among his women) are only four all together: Falstaff and Hamlet, Iago and Edmund. Of these, Hamlet and Iago are also aesthetes, critical consciousnesses of near-preternatural power. Only in Iago does the aesthete predominate, in close alliance with nihilism and sadism.

I place particular emphasis upon Iago’s theatrical and poetic genius, as an appreciation of Iago that I trust will be aesthetic without also being sadomasochistic, since that danger always mingles with any audience’s enjoyment of Iago’s revelations to us. There is no major figure in Shakespeare with whom we are less likely to identify ourselves, and yet Iago is as beyond vice as he is beyond virtue, a fine recognition of Swinburne’s. Robert B. Heilman, who perhaps undervalued Othello (the hero, not the play),
made restitution by warning that there was no single way into Iago: “As the spiritual have-not, Iago is universal, that is, many things at once, and of many times at once.” Swinburne, perhaps tinged with his usual sadomasochism in his high regard for Iago, prophesied that Iago’s stance in hell would be like that of Fari-nata, who stands upright in his tomb: “as if of Hell he had a great disdain.” There is hardly a circle in Dante’s Inferno that Iago could not inhabit, so vast is his potential for ill.

By interpreting Iago as a genius for improvising chaos in others, a gift born out of his own ontological devastation by Othello, I am in some danger of giving us Iago as a negative theologian, perhaps too close to the Miltonic Satan whom he influenced. As I have tried to emphasize, Shakespeare does not write Christian or religious drama; he is not Pedro Calderón de la Barca or (to invoke lesser poet-playwrights) Paul Claudel or T. S. Eliot. Nor is Shakespeare (or Iago) any kind of a heretic; I am baffled when critics argue as to whether Shakespeare was Protestant or Catholic, since the plays are neither. There are gnostic hereti-cal elements in Iago, as there will be in Edmund and in Macbeth, but Shakespeare was not a gnostic, or a hermeticist, or a Neo- platonic occultist. In his extraordinary way, he was the most cu-rious and universal of gleaners, possibly even of esoteric spiritu-alities, yet here too he was primarily an inventor or discoverer. Othello is a Christian, by conversion; Iago’s religion is war, war everywhere—in the streets, in the camp, in his own abyss. Total war is a religion, whose best literary theologian I have cited al-ready, Judge Holden in Cormac McCarthy’s frightening Blood Meridiat. The Judge imitates Iago by expounding a theology of the will, whose ultimate expression is war, against everyone. Iago
says that he has never found a man who knew how to love himself, which means that self-love is the exercise of the will in murdering others. That is Iago’s self-education in the will, since he does not start out with the clear intention of murder. In the beginning was a sense of having been outraged by a loss of identity, accompanied by the inchoate desire to be revenged upon the god Iago had served.

Shakespeare’s finest achievement in *Othello* is Iago’s extraordinary mutations, prompted by his acute self-overhearing as he moves through his eight soliloquies, and their supporting asides. From tentative, experimental promptings on to excited discoveries, Iago’s course develops into a triumphal march, to be ended only by Emilia’s heroic intervention. Much of the theatrical greatness of *Othello* inheres in this triumphalism, in which we unwillingly participate. Properly performed, *Othello* should be a momentary trauma for its audience. *Lear* is equally catastrophic, where Edmund triumphs consistently until the duel with Edgar, but *Lear* is vast, intricate, and varied, and not just in its double plot. In *Othello*, Iago is always at the center of the web, ceaselessly weaving his fiction, and snaring us with dark magic: Only Prospero is comparable, a luminous magus who in part is Shakespeare’s answer to Iago.

You can judge Iago to be, in effect, a misreader of Montaigne, as opposed to Hamlet, who makes of Montaigne the mirror of nature. Kenneth Gross shrewdly observes that “Iago is at best a nightmare image of so vigilant and humanizing a pyrrhonism as Montaigne’s.” Pyrrhonism, or radical skepticism, is transmuted by Hamlet into disinterestedness; Iago turns it into a war against existence, a drive that seeks to argue that there is no reason why any-
thing should be, at all. The exaltation of the will, in Iago, emanates from an ontological lack so great that no human emotion possibly could fill it:

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

[1.3.319–31]

“Virtue” here means something like “manly strength,” while by “reason” Iago intends only his own absence of significant emotion. This prose utterance is the poetic center of Othello, presaging Iago’s conversion of his leader to a reductive and diseased vision of sexuality. We cannot doubt that Othello loves Desdemona; Shakespeare also may suggest that Othello is amazingly reluctant to make love to his wife. As I read the play’s text, the marriage is never consummated, despite Desdemona’s eager desires. Iago derides Othello’s “weak function”; that seems more a hint of Iago’s impotence than of Othello’s, and yet nothing that the Moorish captain-general says or does reflects an authentic lust for Desdemona. This certainly helps explain his murderous rage, once Iago has roused him to jealousy, and also makes that jealousy
more plausible, since Othello literally does not know whether his wife is a virgin, and is afraid to find out, one way or the other. I join here the minority view of Graham Bradshaw, and of only a few others, but this play, of all Shakespeare’s, seems to me the most weakly misread, possibly because its villain is the greatest master of misprision in Shakespeare, or in literature. Why did Othello marry anyway, if he does not sexually desire Desdemona? Iago cannot help us here, and Shakespeare allows us to puzzle the matter out for ourselves, without ever giving us sufficient information to settle the question. But Bradshaw is surely right to say that Othello finally testifies Desdemona died a virgin:

Now. How dost thou look now? O ill-starred wench, 
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. (touches her) Cold, cold, my girl? 
Even like thy chastity.

[5.2.271–75]

Unless Othello is merely raving, we at least must believe he means what he says: she died not only faithful to him but “cold . . . Even like thy chastity.” It is a little difficult to know just what Shakespeare intends Othello to mean, unless his victim had never become his wife, even for the single night when their sexual union was possible. When Othello vows not to “shed her blood,” he means only that he will smother her to death, but the frightening irony is there as well: neither he nor Cassio nor anyone else has ever ended her virginity. Bradshaw finds in this a “ghastly tragicomic parody of an erotic death,” and that is appropriate for Iago’s theatrical achievement.

I want to shift the emphasis from Bradshaw’s in order to ques-
tion a matter upon which Iago had little influence: Why was Othello reluctant, from the start, to consummate the marriage? When, in act 1, scene 3, the Duke of Venice accepts the love match of Othello and Desdemona, and then orders Othello to Cyprus, to lead its defense against an expected Turkish invasion, the Moor asks only that his wife be housed with comfort and dignity during his absence. It is the ardent Desdemona who requests that she accompany her husband:

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.

[1.3.256–60]

Presumably by “rites” Desdemona means consummation, rather than battle, and though Othello seconds her, he rather gratuitously insists that desire for her is not exactly hot in him:

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
In me defunct — 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
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
Make head against my estimation.

[1.3.261–75]

These lines, hardly Othello at his most eloquent, exceed the measure that decorum requires, and do not favor Desdemona. He protests much too much, and hardly betters the case when he urges her off the stage with him:

Come, Desdemona, I have but an hour
Of love, of worldly matter and direction
To spend with thee. We must obey the time.

[1.3.299–301]

If that “hour” is literal, then “love” will be lucky to get twenty minutes of this overbusy general’s time. Even with the Turks impending, the state would surely have allowed its chief military officer an extra hour or two for initially embracing his wife. When he arrives on Cyprus, where Desdemona has preceded him, Othello tells us: “Our wars are done, the Turks are drowned.” That would seem to provide ample time for the deferred matter of making love to his wife, particularly since public feasting is now decreed. Perhaps it is more proper to wait for evening, and so Othello bids Cassio command the watch, and duly says to Desdemona: “Come, my dear love, / The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue: / That profit’s yet to come ’tween me and you,” and exits with her. Iago works up a drunken riot, involving Cassio, Roderigo, and Montano, governor of Cyprus, in which Cassio wounds Montano. Othello, aroused by a tolling bell, enters with
Desdemona following soon afterward. We are not told whether there has been time enough for their "rites," but Othello summons her back to bed, while also announcing that he himself will supervise the dressing of Montano’s wounds. Which had priority, we do not precisely know, but evidently the general preferred his self-imposed obligation toward the governor to his marital obligation.

Iago’s first insinuations of Desdemona’s supposed relationship with Cassio would have no effect if Othello knew her to have been a virgin. It is because he does not know that Othello is so vulnerable. “Why did I marry!” he exclaims, and then points to his cuckold’s horns when he tells Desdemona: “I have a pain upon my forehead, here,” which his poor innocent of a wife attributes to his all-night care of the governor: “Why, that’s with watching,” and tries to bind it hard with the fatal handkerchief, pushed away by him, and so it falls in Emilia’s way. By then, Othello is already Iago’s, and is incapable of resolving his doubts through the only sensible course of finally bringing himself to bed Desdemona.

This is a bewildering labyrinth for the audience, and frequently is not overtly addressed by directors of Othello, who leave us doubtful of their interpretations, or perhaps they are not even aware of the difficulty that requires interpretation. Shakespeare was capable of carelessness, but not upon so crucial a point, for the entire tragedy turns upon it. Desdemona and Othello, alas, scarcely know each other, and sexually do not know each other at all. Shakespeare’s audacious suggestion is that Othello was too frightened or diffident to seize upon the opportunity of the first night in Cyprus, but evaded and delayed the ordeal by devoting himself to the wounded Montano. The further suggestion is that Iago, understanding Othello, fomented the drunken altercation in
order to distract his general from consummation, for otherwise Iago’s manipulations would have been without consequence. That credits Iago with extraordinary insight into Othello, but no one should be surprised at such an evaluation. We can wonder why Shakespeare did not make all this clearer, except that we need to remember his contemporary audience was far superior to us in comprehending through the ear. They knew how to listen; most of us do not, in our overvisual culture. Shakespeare doubtless would not have agreed with William Blake that what could be made explicit to the idiot was not worth his care, but he had learned from Chaucer, in particular, how to be appropriately sly.

Before turning at last to Iago’s triumphalism, I feel obliged to answer my own question: Why did Othello marry when his love for Desdemona was only a secondary response to her primary passion for him? This prelude to tragedy seems plausibly compounded of her ignorance—she is still only a child, rather like Juliet—and his confusion. Othello tells us that he had been nine consecutive months in Venice, away from the battlefield and the camp, and thus he was not himself. Fully engaged in his occupation, he would have been immune to Desdemona’s charmed condition and to her generous passion for his living legend. Their shared idealism is also their mutual illusion: the idealism is beautiful, but the illusion would have been dissolved even if Othello had not passed over Iago for promotion and so still had Iago’s loving worship, rather than the ancient’s vengeful hatred. The fallen Iago will teach Othello that the general’s failure to know Desdemona, sexually and otherwise, was because Othello did not want to know. Bradshaw brilliantly observes that Iago’s genius “is to persuade others that something they had not thought was something they had not wanted to think.” Iago, having been thrown into a
cosmological emptiness, discovers that what he had worshiped as Othello’s warlike fullness of being was in part another emptiness, and Iago’s triumph is to expand that part into very nearly the whole of Othello.

Iago’s terrible greatness (what else can we term it?) is also Shakespeare’s triumph over Christopher Marlowe, whose Barabas, Jew of Malta, had influenced the young Shakespeare so fiercely. We can observe that Iago transcends Barabas, just as Prospero is beyond Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus. One trace of Barabas abides in Iago, though transmogrified by Shakespeare’s more glorious villain: self-delight. Exuberance or gusto, the joy of being Sir John Falstaff, is parodied in Iago’s negative celebrations, and yet to considerable purpose. Emptied out of significant being, Iago mounts out of his sense of injured merit in his new pride of attainments: dramatist, psychologist, aesthetic critic, diabolic analyst, countertherapist. His uncreation of his captain-general, the return of the magnificent Othello to an original chaos, remains the supreme negation in the history of Western literature, far surpassing the labors of his Dostoyevskian disciples, Svidrigailov and Stavrogin, and of his American pupils, Claggart in Melville’s *Billy Budd* and Shrike in Nathanael West’s *Miss Lonelyhearts*. The only nearrivals to Iago are also his students, Milton’s Satan and Cormac McCarthy’s Judge in *Blood Meridian*. Compared with Iago, Satan is hampered by having to work on too cosmic a scale: all of nature goes down with Adam and Eve. McCarthy’s Judge, the only character in modern fiction who genuinely frightens me, is too much bloodier than Iago to sustain the comparison. Iago stabs a man or two in the dark; the Judge scalps Indians and Mexicans by the hundreds. By working in so close to his prime victim, Iago be-
comes the Devil-as-matador, and his own best aficionado, since he is nothing if not critical. The only first-rate Iago I have ever seen was Bob Hoskins, who surmounted his director’s flaws in Jonathan Miller’s BBC television *Othello* of 1981, where Anthony Hopkins as the Moor sank without a trace by being faithful to Miller’s Leavisite (or Eliotic) instructions. Hoskins, always best as a gangster, caught many of the accents of Iago’s underworld pride in his own preternatural wiliness, and at moments showed what a negative beatification might be, in the pleasure of undoing one’s superior at organized violence. Perhaps Hoskins’s Iago was a shade more Marlovian than Shakespearean, almost as though Hoskins (or Miller) had *The Jew of Malta* partly in mind, whereas Iago is refined beyond that farcical an intensity.

Triumphalism is Iago’s most chilling yet engaging mode; his great soliloquies and asides march to an intellectual music matched in Shakespeare only by aspects of Hamlet, and by a few rare moments when Edmund descends to self-celebration. Iago’s inwardness, which sometimes echoes Hamlet’s, enhances his repellent fascination for us: how can a sensible emptiness be so labyrinthine? To trace the phases of Iago’s entrapment of Othello should answer that question, at least in part. But I pause here to deny that Iago represents something crucial in Othello, an assertion made by many interpreters, the most convincing of whom is Edward Snow. In a reading too reliant upon the Freudian psychic mythlogy, Snow finds in Iago the overt spirit that is buried in Othello: a universal male horror of female sexuality, and so a hatred of women.

The Age of Freud wanes, and joins itself now, in many, to the Age of Resentment. That all men fear and hate women and sexuality is neither Freudian nor true, though an aversion to other-
ness is frequent enough, in women as in men. Shakespeare’s lovers, men and women alike, are very various; Othello unfortunately is not one of the sanest among them. Stephen Greenblatt suggests that Othello’s conversion to Christianity has augmented the Moor’s tendency to sexual disgust, a plausible reading of the play’s foreground. Iago seems to see this, even as he intuits Othello’s reluctance to consummate the marriage, but even that does not mean Iago is an inward component of Othello’s psyche, from the start. Nothing can exceed Iago’s power of contamination once he truly begins his campaign, and so it is truer to say that Othello comes to represent Iago than to suggest we ought to see Iago as a component of Othello.

Shakespeare’s art, as manifested in Iago’s ruination of Othello, is in some ways too subtle for criticism to paraphrase. Iago suggests Desdemona’s infidelity by at first not suggesting it, hovering near and around it:

\[Iago\] I do beseech you, 
Though I perchance am vicious in my guess –
As I confess it is my nature’s plague
To spy into abuses, and of my jealousy
Shape faults that are not – that your wisdom
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, or wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

\[Othello\] What dost thou mean?

\[Iago\] 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.

Othello  By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts.
Iago    You cannot, if my heart were in your hand;
        Nor shall not, whilst 'tis in my custody.
Othello  Ha?
Iago    O, beware, my lord, of jealousy,
        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,
        But O, what damnèd minutes tells he o’er
        Who dotes yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!
Othello  O misery!

This would be outrageous if its interplay between Iago and Othello were not so persuasive. Iago manipulates Othello by exploiting what the Moor shares with the jealous God of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, a barely repressed vulnerability to betrayal. Yahweh and Othello alike are vulnerable because they have risked extending themselves, Yahweh to the Jews and Othello to Desdemona. Iago, whose motto is “I am not what I am,” will triumph by tracking this negativity to Othello, until Othello quite forgets he is a man and becomes jealousy incarnate, a parody of the God of vengeance. We underestimate Iago when we consider him only as a dramatist of the self and a psychologist of genius;
his greatest power is as a negative ontotheologian, a diabolical prophet who has a vocation for destruction. He is not the Christian devil or a parody thereof, but rather a free artist of himself, uniquely equipped, by experience and genius, to entrap spirits greater than his own in a bondage founded upon their inner flaws. In a play that held a genius opposed to his own—a Hamlet or a Falstaff—he would be only a frustrated malcontent. Given a world only of gulls and victims—Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Roderigo, even Emilia until outrage turns her—Iago scarcely needs to exercise the full range of powers that he keeps discovering. A fire is always raging within him, and the hypocrisy that represses his satirical intensity in his dealings with others evidently costs him considerable suffering.

That must be why he experiences such relief, even ecstasy, in his extraordinary soliloquies and asides, where he applauds his own performance. Though he rhetorically invokes a “divinity of hell,” neither he nor we have any reason to believe that any demon is listening to him. Though married, and an esteemed flag officer, with a reputation for “honesty,” Iago is as solitary a figure as Edmund, or as Macbeth after Lady Macbeth goes mad. Pleasure, for Iago, is purely sadomasochistic; pleasure, for Othello, consists in the rightful consciousness of command. Othello loves Desdemona, yet primarily as a response to her love for his triumphal consciousness. Passed over, and so nullified, Iago determines to convert his own sadomasochism into a countertriumphalism, one that will commandeer his commander, and then transform the god of his earlier worship into a degradation of godhood. The chaos that Othello rightly feared if he ceased to love Desdemona has been Iago’s natural element since Cassio’s promotion. From that chaos, Iago rises as a new Demiurge, a master of uncreation.
In proposing an ontotheological Iago, I build upon A. C. Bradley's emphasis on the passed-over ancient’s “resentment,” and add to Bradley the idea that resentment can become the only mode of freedom for such great negations as Iago’s Dostoyevskian disciples, Svidrigailov and Stavrogin. They may seem insane compared with Iago, but they inherited his weird lucidity, and his economics of the will. René Girard, a theoretician of envy and scapegoating, feels compelled to take Iago at his word, and so sees Iago as being sexually jealous of Othello. This is to be yet again entrapped by Iago, and adds an unnecessary irony to Girard’s reduction of all Shakespeare to “a theater of envy.” Lev Tolstoy, who fiercely resented Shakespeare, complained of Iago, “There are many motives, but they are all vague.” To feel betrayed by a god, be he Mars or Yahweh, and to desire restitution for one’s wounded self-regard, to me seems the most precise of any villain’s motives: return the god to the abyss into which one has been thrown. Tolstoy’s odd, rationalist Christianity could not reimagine Iago’s negative Christianity.

Iago is one of Shakespeare’s most dazzling performers, equal to Edmund and Macbeth and coming only a little short of Rosalind and Cleopatra, Hamlet and Falstaff, superb charismatics. Negative charisma is an odd endowment; Iago represents it uniquely in Shakespeare, and most literary incarnations of it since owe much to Iago. Edmund, in spite of his own nature, has the element of Don Juan in him, the detachment and freedom from hypocrisy that is fatal for those grand hypocrites, Goneril and Regan. Macbeth, whose prophetic imagination has a universal force, excites our sympathies, however bloody his actions. Iago’s appeal to us is the power of the negative, which is all of him and only a part of Hamlet. We all have our gods, whom we worship, and by whom
we cannot accept rejection. The Sonnets turn upon a painful rejection, of the poet by the young nobleman, a rejection that is more than erotic, and that seems to figure in Falstaff’s public disgrace at Hal’s coronation. Foregrounding Othello requires that we imagine Iago’s humiliation at the election of Cassio, so that we hear the full reverberation of

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,
Which is indeed but sign.

[1.1.152–55]

The ensign, or ancient, who would have died faithfully to preserve Othello’s colors on the battlefield, expresses his repudiation of his former religion, in lines absolutely central to the play. Love of the war god is now but a sign, even though revenge is as yet more an aspiration than a project. The god of war, grand as Othello may be, is a somewhat less formidable figure than the God of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but by a superb ontological instinct, Iago associates the jealousy of one god with that of the other:

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.
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

248
Burn like the mines of sulphur. (*seeing Othello approach*) I did say so.

[3.3.320–29]

The simile works equally well the other way round: proofs of Holy Writ are, to the jealous God, strong confirmations, but the airiest trifles can provoke the Yahweh who in Numbers leads the Israelites through the wilderness. Othello goes mad, and so does Yahweh in Numbers. Iago’s marvelous pride in his “I did say so” leads on to a critical music new even to Shakespeare, one which will engender the aestheticism of John Keats and Walter Pater. The now obsessed Othello stumbles upon the stage, to be greeted by Iago’s most gorgeous outburst of triumphalism:

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 ow’dst yesterday.

[3.3.330–33]

If this were only sadistic exultation, we would not receive so immortal a wound from it; masochistic nostalgia mingleth with the satisfaction of uncreation, as Iago salutes both his own achievement and the consciousness that Othello never will enjoy again. Shakespeare’s Iago-like subtle art is at its highest, as we come to understand that Othello *does not know* precisely because he has not known his wife. Whatever his earlier reluctance to consummate marriage may have been, he now realizes he is incapable of it, and so cannot attain to the truth about Desdemona and Cassio:

I had been happy if the general camp,  
Pioneers 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,
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!
And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove’s dread clamours counterfeit,
Farewell. Othello’s occupation’s gone.

This Hemingwayesque farewell to the big wars has precisely
Ernest Hemingway’s blend of masculine posturing and barely
concealed fear of impotence. There has been no time since the
wedding, whether in Venice or on Cyprus, for Desdemona and
Cassio to have made love, but Cassio had been the go-between
between Othello and Desdemona in the play’s foregrounding.
Othello’s farewell here essentially is to any possibility of consum-
mation; the lost music of military glory has an undersong in
which the martial engines signify more than cannons alone. If
Othello’s occupation is gone, then so is his manhood, and with it
departs also the pride, pomp, and circumstance that compelled
Desdemona’s passion for him, the “circumstance” being more
than pageantry. Chaos comes again, even as Othello’s ontological
identity vanishes, in Iago’s sweetest revenge, marked by the vil-
lain’s sublime rhetorical question: “Is’t possible? my lord?” What
follows is the decisive moment of the play, in which Iago realizes,
for the first time, that Desdemona must be murdered by Othello:
Othello (seizing him) Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
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 wakèd wrath!

Iago Is’t come to this?

Othello Make me to see’t, or at the least so prove it
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,
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.

[3.3.359–73]

Iago’s improvisations, until now, had as their purpose the de-
struction of Othello’s identity, fit recompense for Iago’s vastation.
Suddenly, Iago confronts a grave threat that is also an opportu-
nity: either he or Desdemona must die, with the consequences of
her death to crown the undoing of Othello. How can Othello’s
desire for “the ocular proof” be satisfied?

Iago And may. But how? How satisfied, my lord?
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
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
As ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,
If imputation and strong circumstances,
Which lead directly to the door of truth,
Will give you satisfaction, you might have’t.

[3.3.394–408]

The only ocular proof possible is what Othello will not essay, as Iago well understands, since the Moor will not try his wife’s virginity. Shakespeare shows us jealousy in men as centering upon both visual and temporal obsessions, because of the male fear that there will not be enough time and space for him. Iago plays powerfully upon Othello’s now monumental aversion from the only door of truth that could give satisfaction, the entrance into Desdemona. Psychological mastery cannot surpass Iago’s control of Othello, when the ensign chooses precisely this moment to introduce “a handkerchief, / I am sure it was your wife’s, did I today / See Cassio wipe his beard with.” Dramatic mastery cannot exceed Iago’s exploitation of Othello’s stage gesture of kneeling to swear revenge:

Othello  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
    Swallow them up. Now, by yond marble heaven,
    In the due reverence of a sacred vow
Othello kneels

I here engage my words.

Iago

Do not rise yet.

Iago kneels

Witness, you ever-burning lights above,
You elements that clip us round about,
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.

Othello

I greet thy love
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.

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.

[3.3.457–79]

It is spectacular theater, with Iago as director: “Do not rise yet.” And it is also a countertheology, transcending any Faustian bargain with the Devil, since the stars and the elements serve as witnesses to a murderous pact, which culminates in the reversal of
the passing over of Iago in the play’s foreground. “Now art thou my lieutenant” means something very different from what Othello can understand, while “I am your own for ever” seals Othello’s starry and elemental fate. What remains is only the way down and out, for everyone involved.

Shakespeare creates a terrible pathos for us by not showing Desdemona in her full nature and splendor until we know that she is doomed. Dr. Johnson found the death of Cordelia intolerable; the death of Desdemona, in my experience as a reader and theater-goer, is even more unendurable. Shakespeare stages the scene as a sacrifice, as grimly countertheological as are Iago’s passed-over nihilism and Othello’s “godlike” jealousy. Though Desdemona in her anguish declares she is a Christian, she does not die a martyr to that faith but becomes only another victim of what could be called the religion of Moloch, since she is a sacrifice to the war god whom Iago once worshiped, the Othello he has reduced to incoherence. “Othello’s occupation’s gone”; the shattered relic of Othello murders in the name of that occupation, for he knows no other, and is the walking ghost of what he was.

Millicent Bell has argued that Othello’s is an epistemological tragedy, but only Iago has intellect enough to sustain such a notion, and Iago is not much interested in how he knows what he thinks he knows. Othello, as much as King Lear and Macbeth, is a vision of radical evil; Hamlet is Shakespeare’s tragedy of an intellectual. Though Shakespeare never would commit himself to specifically Christian terms, he approached a kind of gnostic or heretic tragedy in Macbeth, as I will attempt to show. Othello has no transcendental aspect, perhaps because the religion of war does not allow for any. Iago, who makes a new covenant with Othello when they kneel together, had lived and fought in what
he took to be an old covenant with his general, until Cassio was preferred to him. A devout adherent to the fire of battle, his sense of merit injured by his god, has degraded that god into “an honorable murderer,” Othello’s oxymoronic, final vision of his role. Can such degradation allow the dignity required for a tragic protagonist?

A. C. Bradley rated *Othello* below *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth* primarily because it gives us no sense of universal powers impinging upon the limits of the human. I think those powers hover in *Othello*, but they manifest themselves only in the gap that divides the earlier, foregrounded relationship between Iago and Othello from the process of ruination that we observe between them. Iago is so formidable a figure because he has uncanny abilities, endowments only available to a true believer whose trust has transmuted into nihilism. Cain, rejected by Yahweh in favor of Abel, is as much the father of Iago as Iago is the precursor of Milton’s Satan. Iago murders Roderigo and maims Cassio; it is as inconceivable to Iago as to us that Iago seeks to knife Othello. If you have been rejected by your god, then you attack him spiritually or metaphysically, not merely physically. Iago’s greatest triumph is that the lapsed Othello sacrifices Desdemona in the name of the war god Othello, the solitary warrior with whom unwisely she has fallen in love. That may be why Desdemona offers no resistance, and makes so relatively unspirited a defense, first of her virtue and then of her life. Her victimization is all the more complete, and our own horror at it thereby is augmented.

Though criticism frequently has blinded itself to this, Shakespeare had no affection for war, or for violence organized or unorganized. His great killing machines come to sorrowful ends: Othello, Macbeth, Antony, Coriolanus. His favorite warrior is Sir John Falstaff, whose motto is: “Give me life!” Othello’s motto
could be “Give me honor,” which sanctions slaughtering a wife he hasn’t known, supposedly not “in hate, but all in honour.” Dreadfully flawed, even vacuous at the center as Othello is, he still is meant to be the best instance available of a professional mercenary. What Iago once worshiped was real enough, but more vulnerable even than Iago suspected. Shakespeare subtly intimates that Othello’s prior nobility and his later incoherent brutality are two faces of the war god, but it remains the same god. Othello’s occupation’s gone partly because he married at all. Pent-up resentment, and not repressed lust, animates Othello as he avenges his lost autonomy in the name of his honor. Iago’s truest triumph comes when Othello loses his sense of war’s limits, and joins Iago’s incessant campaign against being. “I am not what I am,” Iago’s credo, becomes Othello’s implicit cry. The rapidity and totality of Othello’s descent seems at once the play’s one weakness and its most persuasive strength, as persuasive as Iago.

Desdemona dies so piteously that Shakespeare risks alienating us forever from Othello:

Desdemona (trying to rise) O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!
Othello Down, strumpet!
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.

[5.2.78–83]

Rather operatically, Shakespeare gives Desdemona a dying breath that attempts to exonerate Othello, which would indeed
strain credulity if she were not, as Alvin Kernan wonderfully put it, “Shakespeare’s word for love.” We are made to believe that this was at once the most natural of young women, and also so loyal to her murderer that her exemplary last words sound almost ironic, given Othello’s degradation: “Commend me to my kind lord—O, farewell!” It seems too much more for us to bear that Othello should refuse her final act of love: “She’s like a liar gone to burning hell: / ’Twas I that killed her.” The influential modern assaults upon Othello by T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis take their plausibility (such as it is) from Shakespeare’s heaping up of Othello’s brutality, stupidity, and unmitigated guilt. But Shakespeare allows Othello a great if partial recovery, in an astonishing final speech:

Soft you, a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know’t.
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;
Of one not easily jealous but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme. Of one whose hand,
Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe. Of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum. Set you down this.
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and turbanned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by th’ throat the circumcisèd dog
And smote him (pulls out hidden dagger) thus.

[5.2.337–55]

This famous and problematic outburst rarely provokes any critic to agree with any other, yet the Eliot–Leavis interpretation, which holds that Othello essentially is “cheering himself up,” cannot be right. The Moor remains as divided a character as Shakespeare ever created; we need give no credence to the absurd blindness of “loved not wisely, but too well,” or the outrageous self-deception of “one not easily jealous.” Yet we are moved by the truth of “perplexed in the extreme,” and by the invocation of Herod, “the base Judean” who murdered his Maccabean wife, Mariamme, whom he loved. The association of Othello with Herod the Great is the more shocking for being Othello’s own judgment upon himself, and is followed by the Moor’s tears, and by his fine image of weeping trees. Nor should a fair critic fail to be impressed by Othello’s verdict upon himself: that he has become an enemy of Venice, and as such must be slain. His suicide has nothing Roman in it: Othello passes sentence upon himself, and performs the execution. We need to ask what Venice would have done with Othello, had he allowed himself to survive. I venture that he seeks to forestall what might have been their politic decision: to preserve him until he might be of high use again. Cassio is no Othello; the state has no replacement for the Moor, and might well have used him again, doubtless under some control. All of the rifts in Othello that Iago sensed and exploited are present in this final speech, but so is a final vision of judgment, one in which Othello abandons his nostalgias for glorious war, and pitifully seeks to expiate what cannot be expiated—not, at least, by a farewell to arms.
This is not a bibliography but a selective set of starting places.

Texts


Language


**Culture**

FURTHER READING


**Dramatic Development**


**Theater and Stage**


**Biography**


**General**


FURTHER READING


**Finding List**

Repeated unfamiliar words and meanings, alphabetically arranged, with act, scene, and footnote number of first occurrence, in the spelling (form) of that first occurrence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>act</th>
<th>scene</th>
<th>footnote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>absolute</td>
<td>2.1.195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abused</td>
<td>1.1.194</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accident</td>
<td>1.1.167</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advantage</td>
<td>1.3.282</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ancient</td>
<td>Dram. Pers. 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td>1.1.139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apart</td>
<td>2.3.271</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approve</td>
<td>1.3.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apt</td>
<td>2.1.181</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assay</td>
<td>1.3.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beguile</td>
<td>1.3.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beseech</td>
<td>1.1.140</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bestows</td>
<td>2.1.117</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blood</td>
<td>1.1.189</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bold</td>
<td>1.1.150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bosom</td>
<td>1.2.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brave</td>
<td>1.3.277</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>1.2.113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but</td>
<td>1.1.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by and by</td>
<td>2.1.282</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camp</td>
<td>3.3.193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cast</td>
<td>2.3.197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cause</td>
<td>3.3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certes</td>
<td>1.1.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenge</td>
<td>1.3.173</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chances</td>
<td>1.3.131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>check</td>
<td>1.1.174</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citadel</td>
<td>2.1.107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfort</td>
<td>1.3.191</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common</td>
<td>1.1.147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complexion</td>
<td>3.3.123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition</td>
<td>1.2.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consuls</td>
<td>1.1.37</td>
<td>game</td>
<td>2.1.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>country</td>
<td>1.3.99</td>
<td>general</td>
<td>1.2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course</td>
<td>1.2.110</td>
<td>(adjective)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>court</td>
<td>2.1.216</td>
<td>gentle</td>
<td>1.2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cunning</td>
<td>1.3.106</td>
<td>go to</td>
<td>1.3.354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree</td>
<td>2.1.234</td>
<td>gross</td>
<td>1.1.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deliver</td>
<td>1.3.92</td>
<td>hark</td>
<td>2.3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate</td>
<td>1.1.89</td>
<td>heavy</td>
<td>1.3.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denotement</td>
<td>2.3.229</td>
<td>hither</td>
<td>1.3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deserve</td>
<td>1.1.203</td>
<td>hold</td>
<td>1.2.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devise</td>
<td>3.1.17</td>
<td>honesty</td>
<td>1.3.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direction</td>
<td>2.3.3</td>
<td>idle</td>
<td>1.2.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>done</td>
<td>1.3.157</td>
<td>importing</td>
<td>2.2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duty</td>
<td>1.1.77</td>
<td>importune</td>
<td>2.3.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>else</td>
<td>1.3.270</td>
<td>issue</td>
<td>1.3.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ere</td>
<td>1.3.290</td>
<td>jump</td>
<td>1.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erring</td>
<td>1.3.335</td>
<td>knave</td>
<td>1.1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>even</td>
<td>1.2.47</td>
<td>lads</td>
<td>2.1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>example</td>
<td>2.3.183</td>
<td>liberal</td>
<td>2.1.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>2.1.220</td>
<td>lieutenant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fain</td>
<td>2.3.26</td>
<td>maid</td>
<td>1.2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>1.1.143</td>
<td>malice</td>
<td>2.1.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favor</td>
<td>1.3.320</td>
<td>mark (verb)</td>
<td>1.1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fearful</td>
<td>1.3.14</td>
<td>matches (noun)</td>
<td>3.3.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find</td>
<td>1.1.142</td>
<td>means</td>
<td>1.3.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fit</td>
<td>1.2.109</td>
<td>meet (adverb)</td>
<td>1.1.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fond</td>
<td>1.3.293</td>
<td>mere</td>
<td>1.3.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortunes</td>
<td>1.1.159</td>
<td>minerals</td>
<td>1.2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>framed</td>
<td>1.3.376</td>
<td>mock (noun)</td>
<td>1.2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free</td>
<td>1.2.118</td>
<td>nice</td>
<td>3.3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offend</td>
<td>2.3.52</td>
<td>sense</td>
<td>1.1.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>office</td>
<td>1.3.120</td>
<td>service</td>
<td>1.1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owe</td>
<td>1.1.96</td>
<td>shows</td>
<td>1.1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pains</td>
<td>1.1.203</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>1.3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parts</td>
<td>1.2.40</td>
<td>special</td>
<td>1.3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peculiar</td>
<td>1.1.88</td>
<td>sport</td>
<td>1.3.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perdition</td>
<td>2.2.3</td>
<td>stand</td>
<td>1.2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>1.1.16</td>
<td>still</td>
<td>1.3.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potent</td>
<td>1.3.76</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td>1.1.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice</td>
<td>1.1.40</td>
<td>strumpet</td>
<td>4.1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prated</td>
<td>1.2.8</td>
<td>sufficient</td>
<td>3.4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pray you</td>
<td>1.1.199</td>
<td>suit</td>
<td>1.1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>1.2.112</td>
<td>sure</td>
<td>1.1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>price</td>
<td>1.1.15</td>
<td>taken out</td>
<td>3.3.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prizes (verb)</td>
<td>2.3.91</td>
<td>term</td>
<td>1.1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profane</td>
<td>1.1.137</td>
<td>thence</td>
<td>1.3.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proof</td>
<td>1.1.43</td>
<td>thrive</td>
<td>1.1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proper</td>
<td>1.3.368</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>1.3.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protest (verb)</td>
<td>2.3.236</td>
<td>token</td>
<td>3.3.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prove</td>
<td>1.2.69</td>
<td>touch</td>
<td>2.3.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purposes</td>
<td>1.1.18</td>
<td>tricks</td>
<td>2.1.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put</td>
<td>2.1.136</td>
<td>truly</td>
<td>1.1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality</td>
<td>1.3.271</td>
<td>tuppung</td>
<td>1.1.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quiet</td>
<td>1.1.129</td>
<td>unfolding</td>
<td>1.3.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raise</td>
<td>1.1.188</td>
<td>use</td>
<td>1.3.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retire</td>
<td>2.3.267</td>
<td>villain</td>
<td>1.1.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revolt</td>
<td>1.1.157</td>
<td>villainous</td>
<td>1.3.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rude</td>
<td>1.3.82</td>
<td>vouch</td>
<td>1.3.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saucy</td>
<td>1.1.150</td>
<td>want (noun)</td>
<td>2.1.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secure (verb)</td>
<td>1.3.11</td>
<td>wanton</td>
<td>2.3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>way</td>
<td>1.3.343</td>
<td>without</td>
<td>2.3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wherefor</td>
<td>1.1.114</td>
<td>wits</td>
<td>1.1.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wherein</td>
<td>1.1.36</td>
<td>zounds</td>
<td>1.1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will (verb)</td>
<td>1.2.107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>